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Studies in Historical Christianity

Alfred Edward BY *John*

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EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

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TO
MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to express a point of view. The historico-critical mode of approach is in these days inevitable, and recent literature and contemporary discussion have made everybody familiar with the type of "modernism" which, by seeking to go behind historical Christianity altogether, and to reconstruct critically, from such sources as have come down to us, the portrait of a "Jesus of history" who is somehow to be distinguished from the "Christ of faith," attempts to discover in discipleship to the Jesus thus supposed to be revealed to us the basis of a religious life which shall be essentially independent alike of historic orthodoxy and of the institutional system of the Church. I do not believe that the future lies with a "modernism" of this particular type. I think that Wellhausen was right in remarking, in the closing paragraphs of his *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, that the "Jesus of history," regarded as a basis of religion, is a very dubious and inadequate substitute for "the Gospel"; that "we cannot return to Jesus, even if we would," and that in point of fact Jesus "cannot be understood in abstraction from His effects in history."¹ I would go further, and affirm my belief that just as Jesus cannot be rightly understood in abstraction from His effects in history (i.e., apart from Christianity), so

¹ Wellhausen, *Einleitung in der drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 115.

neither can Christianity be rightly understood apart from the distinctively Christian type of theism and from a recognition of the effectual working of the Spirit in the Christian Church. I believe that the future lies with a constructive "modernism" of the Liberal Evangelical Catholic type, rather than with any form of merely attenuated Protestantism. It is from this point of view that I have tried to write this book.

Of the seven chapters which the book includes, the first five were delivered as lectures to undergraduates of the University of Cambridge in the course of the Lent Term, 1922, in response to an invitation which came to me from the committee of the Cambridge branch of the Student Christian Movement. I have published them without altering the form of direct address, which must be my excuse for a number of expressions of personal opinion with reference to disputed points and sometimes to controversial subjects. Chapters VI and VII have been previously published in *The Pilgrim*, and I owe it to the kindness of Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co., the proprietors of that Review, that I am able to reprint them here. The paper on "The Historical Grounds of Christian Belief" was read in the first instance at a meeting of the Church Congress last year at Birmingham.

I am under a deep obligation of thanks to my father-in-law, the Rev. P. A. Ellis, for help which he has given me by reading the proofs and by seeing the final sheets through the Press.

A. E. J. RAWLINSON.

Oxford, *March*, 1922.

Studies in Historical Christianity

CHAPTER I

CATHOLICISM

THE subjects of the five lectures which you have done me the honour of inviting me to deliver have been chosen for me by your secretary. I am to begin by speaking of Catholicism.

The terms "Catholic" and "Protestant" are commonly taken as opposed. I wish to make it plain at the outset that I do not regard them as standing ideally in any necessary opposition. I believe that the ultimate form of Christianity will be a Liberal Evangelical Catholicism, in which the differences which at present separate divergent schools and denominations will have been transcended and overcome. It is worth remarking that the term "Protestant" did not originally mean "protesting," in the polemical sense of protesting against the alleged doctrinal errors or erroneous practices of others, and that in a merely negative attitude of protest or of sectionalism there is no hope, and very

little Christianity. The original Protestants were men who testified or bore witness or made a solemn affirmation—*protestati sunt*—on behalf of truth.¹ They bore witness or testified, very possibly in an exaggerated and one-sided way, to the importance of certain positive principles of true religion which seemed in danger of being ignored, and to which the Church system of their day failed to give adequate expression. The calamitous consequence was a breach in the outward unity of Western Christendom, a Reformation and a Counter-Reformation; with the result that the Church of the Counter-Reformation became anti-Protestant, and the various forms of Protestant Christianity became anti-Catholic. Unless the values of Protestantism and of Catholicism respectively are capable of being synthesized, and their differences transcended, it is obvious that the ultimate unity of Christendom is unattainable, since neither type or form of Christianity shows the least tendency to die out, and both have been abundantly blessed and owned of God. I believe that the divergent traditions *can* be synthesized, that we have something to learn from one another, and that reconciliation is the purpose of God. I have thought it needful to say so much by way of prelude.

The term "Catholic" is, of course, many centuries older than the term "Protestant." It occurs first in the Epistles of St. Ignatius, early in the second

¹ Historically the term "Protestant" was first applied to the Lutheran Princes and the fourteen Free Cities whose representatives at the Diet of Speyer in A.D. 1529 made a solemn *protestatio* or affirmation of their claim to possess autonomous jurisdiction in ecclesiastical as in civil affairs.

century, and it is there used to denote the Church Universal, as contrasted with the local manifestation of Christian fellowship in a group of worshippers assembled in a particular place. In the same sense the word is used by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century, who writes that "the Church is called Catholic for the reason that it extends through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other."¹ The Catholic Church is the Church Universal: that is the primary, as it is the etymological and original, signification of the term. And Catholic Christianity is the Christianity of the Church Universal. The word did come to bear a derived and secondary meaning: in some contexts it becomes virtually a synonym for "orthodox"; for the Catholic or Universal Church—the "Great Church," as it is sometimes called—was distinguished from the smaller sects which were local, limited and partial; and its teaching was called "Catholic" teaching, as contrasted with theirs, which was held to be "heretical," that is, to involve an element of *αἴρεσις* or self-will. We need not pause to ask whether the early sectaries or their leaders were really exhibiting in all cases a perverse or self-willed temper, such as the use of the term *αἴρεσις* insinuates. We should all to-day admit without question that a man may be technically "heretical" without being morally perverse, just as it is possible for a man to be "orthodox" without being either charitable in his judgments or Christian in spirit. At the same time, the majority of those who have made a study of

¹ *Catechetical Lectures*, xviii. 23.

early Church history are disposed to recognize that on the broader issues the "Great Church" was apt to be more right than wrong, and the small sects, in so far as they differed from the Great Church and from one another, were apt to be more wrong than right. It is with this idea in mind that St. Vincent of Lerinum, about the middle of the fifth century, defines Catholic doctrine as that presentation of Christian truth for which it was claimed that it had been held by true Christians "always, in all places and universally"—*semper, ubique et ab omnibus*—a famous saying of which subsequent controversialists have often made extremely unintelligent use.

If I am asked what I personally intend and understand by Catholicism, I am disposed to borrow a phrase from the present Bishop of Bombay, and to say that I intend primarily a consciousness of the "Great Church," or what the Bishop calls "a Great Church sense" and "a Great Church loyalty," as contrasted with all forms of "Little Churchism," which are local or insular or sectional. And by this I mean that in my approach to religion I attach weight to the great corporate tradition of Christendom as a whole: that I claim as my own the full inheritance of all that Christianity in all its developments has come to be—whatsoever things are true, that is, and whatsoever things are lovely—all, of whatever kind or from whatever quarter, whether in the way of faith, practice, worship, devotion or discipline, which has been found by experience to be capable of building up the spiritual life of men and women, and enabling them to be "in Christ." This

does not mean, as I trust, that I am disloyal to the Church of England, of which I happen to be a member : it is inevitably through the life, the institutions, the discipline and the spiritual tradition of the Church of England that the inheritance of Catholic Christianity is primarily mediated to an Anglican. But of course also the development of what I have followed the Bishop of Bombay in calling a " Great Church " consciousness means that I, and others who share in it, am far from being *satisfied* (who, indeed, could be?) with the Church of England precisely as it is : and the development of " Great Church loyalty " means a liberal as well as a critical attitude towards " Little Church " loyalties, because it means the ideal of a Christianity and of a Churchmanship which shall be genuinely synthetic, involving both a readiness to learn from whatever side, and a desire to combine in unity divergent spiritual traditions. What we all need to get away from is the tone and temper of the partisan, the spirit of bigotry and of a prejudiced mind, the limited outlook which, from sheer lack of imagination and defect of sympathy, is content to acquiesce in a partial view of things, and to treat the spiritual experience of the greater part of Christendom as of no account. It is the temper exhibited by the Roman who ignores the Christianity of Protestants and of the Eastern Church. It is the temper exhibited equally by the Protestant who ignores the Christianity of Rome.

I am not arguing, of course, for an uncritical eclecticism, still less for a mere subservience to

tradition. I believe that tradition has authority, because of the witness which it bears to truth as tested in experience, and because, therefore, of the experience which it represents ; and I believe that account must be taken of every tradition which has a body of tested experience behind it. But I do not believe in infallibilities, whether of the Bible or of the Church. I think it is essential that tradition should be criticized, since so only can it be rightly interpreted and understood. It is perhaps hardly necessary, in addressing an audience of university men and women, to emphasize the importance of entire intellectual honesty, of untrammelled freedom of thought and candour of mind. I take that simply for granted without discussion. I am addressing, however, an audience consisting mainly of Student Movement men and women, and that means, I imagine, that there are certain other things also which I may venture to take for granted. You are men and women, I take it, who have been led to believe, or at least to suspect, that in Jesus Christ somehow is to be found the secret and source of the highest life, and the clue to the mystery of what life means. Whatever the various ways in which you might be disposed to express intellectually a doctrine of His Person (and perhaps many of you might be reluctant in any too definite fashion at present to do so at all), you are probably at one in a practical acknowledgment of His claim to be Lord and Master of all good life : and if so, then He is clearly for you no mere dead Figure in the past : He is coming to have, or He has already, in your experience the value

of God. You are, in fact, at least in a fair way to endorsing, if you do not as yet in all cases fully and consciously endorse, the great affirmation made in the Nicene Creed, viz., that the Christ who is true Man is also, in His essential being, one with God : and whatever you may think about that way of putting it, I believe that I might with entire justification assume on the part of all or of most of my hearers a real belief in the living God and the equally living Christ.

There is, however, another great Christian belief of most vital importance, without which I am not at all likely to carry you with me in what I have still to say ; and that is the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit—Giver of Life, Illuminator, Source of all spiritual power and grace and truth—the Holy Spirit regarded as a supreme and living Divine Activity continuously at work, not only in the inspiration and re-creation of individual Christian lives, but in the life and development of the Christian Church and of the Christian tradition as a whole. There is much individualist Christianity about to-day which is (as I think, wrongly) extremely impatient of Christian tradition, and merely discontented with the Church, and which for that reason (as I believe) casts lightly away a large part of its spiritual heritage. We are all, I imagine, alive to the evils of anything like mere ecclesiasticism, to the deadness of tradition apart from the spirit, the strange lack of fellowship in much of our modern Church life, the incompetence of clergy and ministers, the slowness of the official mind with its ingrained conservatism, and the creaking of the

wheels of the machinery of the official Church : we could all go on, if we chose, abusing the Church, or (in the cant jargon of newspaper usage) "the Churches," without profit for hours by the clock. We should merely be guilty of spiritual blindness and sin.

All this kind of thing you will find done much better in the Old Testament, a book which abounds with most scathing denunciations of the people of God ; denunciations which were uttered or written by prophets of whom it was as true that they had something to teach to the Church of their age, as it is true of ourselves that we have a great deal to learn from the Church of the ages : yet none of the prophets, not even the most unsparing in denunciation of them all, ever dreamed of seceding or cutting himself off from the Israel of God.

The religion of the Bible is social from first to last : it is rooted in the conception of membership in the Holy People—Israel after the flesh in the Old Testament, Israel after the Spirit in the New—which here upon earth is the expression, however imperfect, of God's ultimate purpose to save and redeem mankind. And I would draw your attention to a point about the Acts of the Apostles. We all know that the Tübingen school of New Testament critics was largely wrong ; but Baur, the great founder of that school, was profoundly right when he regarded the Acts as essentially a document of early Catholicism, and in our own time Harnack has put very clearly the point which is in my mind : he has asked why it was that the book, plainly written, as it is, to form a

sequel to the Gospel, was not regarded by its author as an anti-climax to the life of Christ.¹ The significance of the question comes out when we remind ourselves that the Acts is the earliest Church history, and there is a modern point of view which, with the war-cry "Back to Jesus," does regard Church history as an anti-climax to the life of Christ. St. Luke plainly did not so regard it : he writes the Acts as a true sequel, a continuation of the life of Jesus in the Gospel. But it cannot be this so long as attention is concentrated only on the sins and infirmities of the human characters in the story—on the scandalous behaviour of Ananias and Sapphira, for example, or the episode of Simon Magus, or the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas, or the dispute about circumcision, which so nearly split the Church. The Acts can be a genuine sequel to the Gospel only if we are able to discover in it the working of some deeper principle, some Agency not merely human but divine. St. Luke discovers such a principle in the Holy Spirit. For him the Spirit is the supreme Agent, the chief character in the book : and the purpose of the Acts is precisely to show how the Spirit, working through the Apostles and their associates in despite of human weaknesses and sins, triumphed successfully over every obstacle, built up the Christian fellowship, guided the life of the Church, called into being the mission to the Gentiles and conducted the Gospel (after how many vicissitudes!) from Jerusalem at last to Rome. It is a wonderful story, but I do not believe the subsequent

¹ Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles* [E. T.], Introd. pp. xvii. seq.

story of Christianity down to our own day to be any the less wonderful, or any the less a work of the Holy Spirit ; and with this conviction I am quite unable to regard vast tracts and areas of Church life and of Church history as constituting simply or mainly a record of degeneration and error. There has, of course, been error and degeneration, and no doubt there have been outcrops of superstition and paganism as well. The record of Christian history has been chequered enough : there have been periods of worldliness and spiritual atrophy, there have been abuses and corruptions, the prevalence from time to time of the kind of clericalism which is in very deed the enemy, the preference of orthodoxy to charity and of docility to reasonable service, sometimes a very unchristian temper of obscurantism and narrowness of mind. What I am unable to believe is that the Christian Church as a whole has been suffered to go fundamentally astray, in such a fashion as to misconceive the true nature and implications of its own religion—a view which always appears to me to be inconsistent with any serious belief either in the Divine Over-ruling of history, or in the reality of the continuous working of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Society.

You will sometimes find it asserted in the writings of modern scholars that Catholicism, or the Christianity which in early centuries came to prevail over the Mediterranean world and so profoundly influenced the civilization of Europe, was essentially an eclectic system in which very diverse elements, Greek and Oriental as well as Jewish or purely Christian in

ultimate origin, were fused and blended. In a certain sense I think that the statement is true, and moreover that the syncretism in question goes back to New Testament times, and is reflected in the New Testament books themselves. How should it, in fact, be otherwise? The civilization of the ancient Hellenistic world into which Christianity was carried was already syncretistic, and many elements of life and of religion which had nothing directly to do with the Gospel of Jesus in its original Jewish form were inevitably and at an early stage "baptized into Christ." The real question is not whether the Christian movement, originally Jewish, subsequently took up and assimilated into its synthesis elements of thought and practice, of ceremonial worship and cultus, which came to it from ethnic rather than from Jewish sources, but whether, in doing so, it was or was not guided by the Spirit in such a fashion as to be able, with a certain sureness of spiritual instinct, to refuse the evil and to choose the good. I believe that it *was* so guided; and that the result was upon the whole a Christianization of what was pagan, and not a paganization of what was Christian; a necessary adaptation to a new environment of the essential spirit of the Gospel, a development incidental to the transformation of what had else remained only a minor sect of Judaism into an universal Church. But I believe also that the impulse to catholicize was itself inherent in the Gospel from the beginning, and that it has its roots in the universal significance which the Church has rightly discovered in Jesus Christ.

By Catholicism, then, I mean broadly the Christianity of history : various, many-sided, complex ; into which, if you like, " the heritage of the heathen " has been brought ; but which has shown itself capable of developing Christian sanctity among men of all races and of all varieties of temperament, and which yet has been in many countries a genuine folk-religion and not merely a religion of the elect : and my attitude towards it I can best express if I may be allowed to parody a line of Terence and to say *Christianus sum : Christiani nihil a me alienum puto*—" I am a Christian, and therefore I regard everything Christian as being akin to me." That I could not accept without criticism either the Christianity of mediæval Europe or that of modern Rome or that of any other particular variety of the Christian tradition I have indicated already : I cannot but add that a Christianity based solely upon the post-Reformation traditions of Protestantism, or, if you like, a Christianity which seeks to base itself solely upon New Testament origins, and which regards later developments simply as perversions to be ignored, seems to me always to suffer from a certain incurable provincialism of mind and outlook, to be jejune and limited in range, to be lacking in wholeness and broad humanity and depth of understanding of the human soul. For it appears to me that it has been in Protestantism, rather than in Catholicism, that the attempt has been made to cut all varieties of temperament after one pattern : and that the Catholic tradition, especially on the side of moral and ascetical theology, is the repository of a vast inherited experience of the actual working of

Divine grace and of religious psychology in every variety of temperament and mind and level of culture—a veritable science of the spiritual life—which Protestants commonly ignore, to their own great loss.

The great Catholic thinker, Baron von Hügel, has drawn attention to the fact that a full and balanced spiritual life is constituted in a kind of synthetic tension involving the continuous mutual interplay of three distinguishable elements or factors, to which he has given the names of the intellectual, the mystical and the institutional elements of religion. It would be easy to illustrate the truth of the thesis historically; for example, in Judaism by the contributions respectively of prophets and priests and wise men; or again, in the Anglicanism of to-day by the so-called schools, High, Low, and Broad. It is probable that the majority of us can recognize, in our own personal religious life, that we are temperamentally inclined or predisposed towards a preponderating emphasis upon one or the other element of the three. It is surely of importance that we should not simply succumb to a temperamental limitation by acquiescence in what is partial and unbalanced, but rather that we should make deliberately for wholeness by the conscious cultivation of just those elements in the religious synthesis which at first sight least immediately appeal to us. Upon the isolation or the exaggerated pursuit of some one or other of the three elements to the relative exclusion of the other two have been founded all the divisive schools and sects of Christendom: a true Catholicism will give full

relative value to all the three. For, indeed, each of the three in isolation stands in sore need of the complementary contributions of the other two: it is in such circumstances that institutionalism becomes formalist; that mysticism or the religion of personal immediacy becomes pietistic, fanatical or moody; that religious intellectualism becomes arid, negative or merely critical. I am to speak in the next two lectures about episcopacy and about sacraments: that is to say, about certain particular institutions of historical Catholicism. I should like here and now to forestall and guard against any apparent implication of one-sidedness by saying that while I regard institutional and sacramental Christianity as of great importance, I think it essential that those who in devotional life and practice are what is in ordinary slang called "Catholic" should also be Evangelical for the sake of their Christianity, and Liberal for the sake of soundness of mind and honesty and truth.

Let me end this lecture by summarizing, if I may, some Catholic positions—still taking Catholicism to mean, in the broad sense, historical Christianity, or the Christianity of the Great Church, as opposed, on the one hand, to any kind of sectionalism, on the other, to any of the various "reduced" or attenuated Christianities occasionally offered for our acceptance in modern times.

Characteristic, then, as I think, of historical Christianity is its doctrine of God. Catholicism inherits and presupposes the distinctively Jewish faith in the Living God: in God, that is, as Creator,

alive and active, operative in the world and in human history, and disclosing Himself not simply through what He *is*, but through what He *does*. The God of Catholicism is more than an eternal First Cause, an *ex-officio* Explanation, of the world : and He is more than a personified name for the spiritual ideals of Goodness and Beauty and Truth. He is not, as the phrase goes, " adjectival " to the world, but the Creator and Sustainer of a world which, apart from the putting forth of His continuously creative energy, would cease to exist. Men, too, are the creatures of God. They are human, and not divine. They are made in God's image and likeness, and meant for communion with God, in whose service alone they attain to true spiritual freedom. They are free, none the less, to refuse God their worship and loyalty, though to do so be slavery, wretchedness, final defeat. They have actually done so, and that is the meaning of sin. The result is a spiritual *impasse* from which God, and He only, can rescue mankind.

For Catholicism is anti-Pelagian, that is, it repudiates completely the idea that the recovery of man is within his own power. It affirms that in every recovery, each movement or impulse of man towards good, the initiative is not in man, but is always in God ; and the power, which enables a man to seek God, is itself God's own gift. Man could not have sought and found God, unless God had first sought and found man. The activity and the initiative and the enabling power and the spiritual victory are God's, and not man's. This idea, not of man seeking

God, but of God seeking man, is of central importance : the distinctive idea, I believe, of the Gospel of Christ. It is just that which *makes* it a Gospel—a piece of Good News : God took action in Christ to redeem, God takes action to-day, through the Spirit, Life-Giver, Restorer, who makes all things new. Very essential and vital to Christianity is this doctrine of the Spirit as the new-creative Energy of God.

And redemption is corporate and social, not merely individual. There is no *salus extra ecclesiam*. You will not mistake me, or suppose me to mean that except a man belong, here and now, to this or that branch of the Church Visible, he cannot be saved. I am talking of the essential idea of Christianity, that salvation is social. In this sense there is, and can be, but one Catholic Church. And the Church, in essential idea, is no human device, but the Israel of God, “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, enrolled in the heavens.” In this sense there can no more be two or more Churches than two or more gods. God is one, and of course, of necessity, His people is one. That is why Christian unity matters, and schism is sin. Just at present we all are in schism, and therefore we all are in sin ; and to pray and to work for reunion is therefore a duty. The first step, I believe, towards reunion is not to ignore present differences. It is rather to seek to develop, in ourselves and in others, a Catholic mind : and that means, I have tried to suggest, “Great Church” loyalty, and a just estimate of the limits of all merely “Little Church” loyalties.

But what, you will ask, of the relation of the Church to the Bible? Are not the Scriptures the "pillar and ground of the truth"? In the Scriptures themselves it is the Church that has so been described: the Bible belongs to the Church, is the Book of the Church. It is so, since the Church both took over the Scriptures of Judaism, and also at a later stage gradually canonized Books of its own. But Christianity is not and cannot be, in the same sense as Judaism or as Mohammedanism, the religion of a Book: it is primarily the religion of the Incarnation, and the religion of the Spirit. For us Christians, and for the Church Catholic, the eternal "Word of God" is not primarily the Bible, but the Christ whom the Spirit interprets. The Bible is a standard for all that: but it needs to be spiritually interpreted in a Christian sense. The Old Testament, of course, is not primarily Christian at all: it is the record and literary deposit of a spiritual development of which Christ is the culmination. The New Testament, on the other hand, is the record of the experiences and recollections, the outlook and point of view, of the generation, and the immediate successors of the generation, among whom Christ came. Its value, as such, is twofold: it confronts us, in the first place, indirectly but really, with Jesus Himself, of whose life, teaching, death, resurrection, and continued activity through the Spirit in the Church it is so striking, and on the whole so unselfconscious, an expression and outcome; and it is, in the second place, just because of the position which the Church itself originally gave to it, a standard and norm of all

subsequent Christian developments. If there is a sense in which "so-called New Testament Christianity is the Christianity of the rattle and the feeding-bottle," there is also a sense in which by their congruity, not indeed with the letter, but with the spirit of the New Testament, all later developments of Christianity need to be constantly tested and judged.

CHAPTER II

EPISCOPACY

EPISCOPACY is the expression of the Church's sense of authoritative mission to proclaim and mediate to all the world a supreme and transforming message of spiritual life and truth and power, and therewith to bestow also the Holy Spirit, to bring men into effectual contact with the eternal Christ who is "the food of the full-grown,"¹ and to relate them vitally to God. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"—that is the essence of Episcopacy, and of what is true in the doctrine of Apostolical Succession. We may take the words, and I think that we ought to take them, as an expression primarily of the mission of the Church, rather than of a sacerdotal caste within the Church. We may hold to the priesthood of all believers, the duty and privilege of all Christians to be "kings and priests unto God": that is certainly a Christian doctrine. But the Church necessarily exercises her corporate priesthood for certain purposes through ministerial agents, and in the economy of her corporate life certain men are set in positions of spiritual authority as pastors guiding

¹ "Cibus sum grandium; cresce, et manducabis Me" (Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, x).

and shepherding the souls of others, in subordination to the Chief Shepherd whose ministers they are. There are English Churchmen who are restive under their bishops, and some who would invert a current catchword and say that bishops are of the *esse*, but not of the *bene esse*, of the Church. On the other hand, a young German Lutheran remarked to a friend of mine, "I envy you your English bishops: we Lutherans have no 'fathers in God.' "

The origins of episcopacy are obscure, and not really very important. It is possible to argue that in principle episcopacy, or something like it, was inherent in Christianity from the beginning. The Church of apostolic times, as mirrored in the New Testament, does not seem to have been democratically governed, any more than groups of Christians newly evangelized in heathen countries by missionaries of whatever Christian "denomination" are governed democratically to-day. How emphatic was the position of authority exercised by an "apostle" is evident from 2 Cor. xiii. 10 ("according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down") and 1 Cor. iv. 21 ("What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod?"); and St. Paul, we know, regarded his apostolate as being based, not upon the choice of the community, but upon direct appointment from Christ Himself, exactly as in the case of the original "apostles" of the Lord.

Besides the "apostles," we hear also in New Testament times of certain who discharged functions

of oversight (ἐπισκόπη)¹ and service (διακονία)²: and from the words which are used to describe their position and functions in the Christian community the later technical terms "bishop" and "deacon" respectively, are derived. The term "elder" (πρεσβύτερος), from which are derived the English words "presbyter" and "priest," is frequently in the New Testament descriptive of some kind of Christian official, though the functions of "presbyters" in the New Testament period are hard to define. "Elders" appear rather suddenly in the Church at Jerusalem³; elsewhere they are "appointed" or "chosen" by Paul and Barnabas in the cities where they had made converts⁴; they existed at Ephesus,⁵ and Titus is enjoined to "make elders" in the cities of Crete.⁶ From the fact that the "elders" of Ephesus are in Acts xx. 28 described also as "bishops," it has been supposed by some scholars that the functions of "bishop" and "presbyter" were at one time identical, and it is clear from Philipp. i. 1 that there were more "bishops" than one in the Church at Philippi. On the other hand the anti-thesis which elsewhere appears between "elder"

¹ Acts i. 20; 1 Tim. iii. 1; cf. Acts xx. 28, Philipp. i. 1, 1 Tim. iii. 1-2, Tit. i. 7.

² The references to various forms of διακονία and the various uses of the term διάκονος in the New Testament are too many to quote; the two words repay study with the help of a Greek Concordance to the New Testament.

³ Acts xi. 30.

⁴ Acts xiv. 23: for the use of χειροτονεῖν in the sense of "to choose" or "appoint," without any implied reference to election by show of hands, cf. Acts x. 41.

⁵ Acts xx. 17.

⁶ Tit. i. 5.

and "younger" ¹ has given rise to the conjecture that the former term was originally the correlative of the latter, and that it stood simply for a quasi-official class of "older men" in the Church, out of whose number the "bishops" were appointed, as the "deacons" were probably chosen from the ranks of the "younger": that is to say, a distinction is drawn between "appointed" or "ruling elders" (cf. 1 Tim. v. 17) and other "older men" in the Church who (upon this hypothesis) do not precisely bear rule, but are simply regarded as "seniors" deserving of reverence.

With regard to the method of appointment, there is no real reason to doubt that in most, if not in all, cases it was by laying on of hands, accompanied by prayer. Laying on of hands is described in the New Testament as being used with a variety of intentions in various contexts—in healing the sick, for example,² or as a means of invoking the bestowal of the Spirit,³ possibly also in the reconciliation of penitents.⁴ In Acts xiii. 3, it is used in connection with the authorization and despatch of missionaries for a specific piece of work. Elsewhere⁵ it seems undoubtedly to be the means of "ordination," that is, of the setting apart and commissioning of persons appointed to some specific office or function in the Church. The clue to its meaning is probably to be found in Numbers xxvii. 18-20, where Moses is instructed to

¹ 1 Tim. v. 1; Tit. ii. 2-6; 1 Pet. v. 5.

² Mark xvi. 18; Acts ix. 12, 17.

³ Acts viii. 17, 19, xix. 6.

⁴ 1 Tim. v. 22.

⁵ So in Acts vi. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6.

lay his hand on Joshua—"Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And *thou shalt put of thine honour upon him*, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey." The laying on of hands in this connection is not a magical rite: it is a symbol, or, if we like to call it so, an *effectual* symbol, a sacrament. And what it signifies is the solemn bestowal of authority by one who has it from God upon one who, though marked out as fitted to receive it by signal gifts of the Holy Spirit, and duly called and designated thereto, as yet has it not.

The Bishop of Bombay, who emphasizes this point,¹ draws attention to the small part played in New Testament "ordinations" by the people, or as we should say, by the Christian laity. "The background of the New Testament is theocratic, not democratic," he writes. "The so-called democratic character of the Church is to a great extent a mere unhistorical anachronism."² I think the Bishop is right in saying this. For one thing, the Christians of New Testament times were not, as a matter of fact, modern democrats, and the theocratic conception of God's people which formed part of their inheritance from the Old Testament made it more or less inevitable that they should think and act as they did; and for another thing, the Church, as I have already remarked, was in New Testament times predominantly

¹ *The Great Church Awakes*, pp. 83 seq.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

a missionary Church, and on the mission field the authority of the missionary tends naturally to be paramount. If, as is possible, St. Luke means the narrative of the selection and appointment of the seven so-called "deacons" at Jerusalem to be a typical example of the appointment of men to office in the Church, it would seem that the part of the people was limited to the selection and putting forward of suitable candidates: the actual commissioning or "ordination" of the candidates rested with those who were already in authority—in this case with the apostles, who were, in effect, delegating to the seven men in question certain of the duties and functions which had hitherto been discharged by themselves personally as the commissioned representatives of Christ.

When we go outside the New Testament period and ask what happened with regard to the ministry of the Church in sub-apostolic times, we find that the evidence is scanty and the interpretation of it even more ambiguous and disputable than that of the New Testament itself. It is possible to argue—and there are those who regard it as a plausible conjecture—that as the apostolic generation drew to its close the survivors of the original apostles, with others who, upon whatever grounds, were regarded as occupying positions of equivalent authority in the Church, took steps deliberately to regularize the system of ministry and to make provision for its continuance. So, apparently, thought Clement of Rome, who about A.D. 96 wrote that the apostles "preaching in district after district and in city after

city, used to make their first fruits, after proving them by the Spirit, into bishops and deacons for the future believers. . . . And our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife about the dignity of the function of oversight. For this cause, then, having received complete foreknowledge, they made the afore mentioned [bishops and deacons] and subsequently made further provision that, if these fell asleep, other approved men might succeed to their ministry. Those then who were made by them or subsequently by other men of repute with the consent of the whole Church . . . it will be no small sin to us if we throw out of the episcopate.”¹ It is not necessary with Harnack to regard this statement of Clement’s as involving a “momentous fiction.”² It is certainly written in all good faith, and clearly represents what was currently believed about the matter towards the end of the first century at Rome. On the other hand the document known as the *Didache*, which many people are disposed to date about the same time as Clement’s letter, appears to contemplate a local ministry of “bishops” and “deacons” in virtual subordination to the theocratic authority of an itinerating ministry of “apostles” (here probably = “missionaries”) and “prophets,” and contains the injunction, addressed apparently to the local Church community, “Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord.”³ Both the interpretation and the date

¹ Clem. Rom. *ad Corinth.* xlii.-xliv.

² Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church*, E.T., p. 94.

³ *Didache*, xv.

of the *Didache* as commonly accepted are vigorously challenged by scholars of distinction, notably by the Dean of Wells: but it is at least possible that it reflects a phase of Church life and institutions which actually did prevail for a time in some part of the early Christian world; and there may therefore have been in some places a stage of development at which "bishops" and "deacons" in sub-apostolic times were appointed, and presumably ordained, not by apostles or "distinguished men" of quasi-apostolic rank and authority, but by the local community of Christians acting for itself, in perhaps inevitable isolation from the more widely representative authority of the Church Universal.

Such a state of affairs, however, if indeed it ever actually obtained, did not in any case endure for very long. There is no need to carry further the discussion in detail of early evidence, since no one disputes that, whatever may have been the precise course of development in different localities, the Church early settled down, with remarkable unanimity, and under the guidance, as I should maintain, of the Holy Spirit, to a common and unified system of ministry, constituted, as it happens, not in the two orders of "bishops" and "deacons," but in the three orders of bishops, presbyters and deacons. We first hear of such a threefold ministry, characterized by the use of all three of the terms "bishop," "presbyter" and "deacon" in something like the specialized sense with which subsequent usage has made everybody familiar, in the Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch, written probably about A.D. 110. The system

implied in these documents has been described as *congregational monepiscopacy*. It is certainly mon-episcopal, in the sense that there is one bishop exercising in each city the office of chief pastor in relation to the Christian flock : it is congregational, in the sense that the Christians in each city may not have been as yet too numerous to come together in one eucharistic assembly, and the bishop appears to have been the normal celebrant of the Eucharist, though he might, if need arose, depute this duty, presumably to one of the presbyters. " Let that be accounted a valid eucharist," writes St. Ignatius, " which is under the bishop, or him to whom the bishop entrusts it." ¹ Apart from this, the presbyters seem at this stage to have been a kind of advisory council acting with the bishop in matters of administration and discipline, and the deacons to have been, as their name implies, the " servants " of the local church.

As the Church expanded in numbers, and the Christians in a city became too numerous to meet all together for worship in a single common assembly, a problem arose which it would have been *possible*, no doubt, to solve by the formation of a new congregation upon independent lines under a bishop of its own. This expedient appears, so far as we can see, in no case to have been adopted. Such " congregational independency " seems to have been in ancient times unknown. Rather, in the interests of unity, new congregations remained subordinate to the old : one bishop to each city continued to be the

¹ Ignat. *ad Smyrn.* viii.

rule ; and the pastoral needs of branch congregations were met by the deputing of one or more presbyters to act in subordination to the bishop as what we should now call parish priests. It was in this way, apparently, that is, through the deputing of presbyters to act for the bishop, and the delegation to presbyters of functions which were originally episcopal, that out of an originally congregational episcopate diocesan episcopacy arose—though, of course, the ancient diocese was, and in most cases long continued to be, of manageable size. Certain functions the bishops retained, and continued to retain, in their own hands—in particular the right of ordaining deacons, and of taking the chief part in ordinations to the presbyterate ; in Western Christendom also the function of “ confirming,” by laying on of hands, all those who were baptized. Moreover, it early came to be the universal rule, and perhaps may have been the rule from the beginning,¹ that a new bishop could only be consecrated by those who were themselves already bishops. It is enjoined in the fourth Canon of Nicæa² that the consecrators must be neighbouring bishops, in number at least three ; and this was no doubt only a stereotyping of already existing usage. In this way the ministry of the local church was linked on with, and commissioned by representatives of, the ministry of the Church Universal. And that is one great point of episcopacy as it exists to-day. It stands in broad

¹ The prevalence in early times of a “ presbyterian ” system at Alexandria is possible, but not certain. See *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, Vol. I, pp. 160 *seq.*

² The Council of Nicæa was held in A.D. 325.

principle for a Catholic and historical, as distinct from a merely local or sectional, system of ministry and order in the Church. It carries continuity with the past as well as wide extension in the present. But it also "symbolizes and means that the authority of the minister does not proceed from the contemporary Church or any part of it, but from Christ the Head, for whom each apostle and bishop acts by commission."¹

No doubt it is a product of development. We need not claim for it that it was directly instituted by Christ Himself in the precise form which it subsequently assumed. If we like to say that the ultimate principle underlying it is implicit in our Lord's choice of the apostles, we may do so; but if so, it is probable that in the sub-apostolic age there was hesitancy and variation in the application of the principle, and that some little time was required before the idea of succession, in the sense of a transmitted authorization in the name of Christ from ordainer to ordained, and from consecrator to consecrated, took concrete shape in definite and clear-cut institutions. The point is that it did, as a matter of history, so take shape, and that the ordered system of threefold ministry became universal in the Church and continued to be so down to the Reformation, at which period, in some parts of Christendom, the continuity was broken.

Moreover, again as a matter of history, stress came to be laid in the Church, from various points of view, upon the idea of a succession from the apostles. The

¹ Bishop of Bombay, *The Great Church Awakes*, pp. 156-157.

whole question of apostolic succession and of what has at various times been meant by it, has recently been exhaustively investigated by Prof. C. H. Turner¹ and reviewed more briefly by Dr. A. C. Headlam in his *Bampton Lectures*. Dr. Headlam, in agreement, very largely, with Prof. Turner, distinguishes three senses in which apostolical succession has been affirmed. The first and earliest is that which is involved in the argument of St. Irenæus against the Gnostics. In reply to the claim of the various Gnostic teachers to be in possession of a secret tradition of Christian doctrine, Irenæus appealed to the open and public tradition of Christian teaching handed on from bishop to bishop in continuous succession in the great Churches, such as Rome, Antioch or Jerusalem, which claimed to be of apostolic foundation, and in other Churches also which had their tradition from them. In this sense the bishop is simply the authoritative exponent of a continuous Church tradition, just as the successive heads of a college at one of our universities might be regarded as the repositories of a continuous college tradition.

In the second place, Dr. Headlam points out that from the third century onwards, "the bishops began to be spoken of more directly in their personal capacity as the successors of the apostles. This meant that they performed the functions of the apostles. Like them, they were the rulers of the Church, they administered its discipline, they were

¹ *The Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, edited by H. B. Swete, pp. 95 seq.

its principal teachers, they preserved and guaranteed the truth of its doctrine,"¹ etc. Here, again, it might be said that in like manner the successive presidents of a college discharge one after another the same functions of presidency.

There is, however, a third sense of the term—it is that which lays stress upon the transmission of ministerial authority from ordainer to ordained ; in Dr. Headlam's phrase, " not merely a succession of office, but a succession of ordination." Now, it cannot be denied that, in the Church's historical system of ministry, such a transmission of authorization to minister from consecrator to consecrated, and from ordainer to ordained, takes place ; it is, moreover, a fact of history that such a " succession of ordination " goes back, upon any view, to extremely early times, and may be interpreted, if any one chooses so to interpret it, as the continuation in principle of our Lord's original " sending " of the apostles. Dr. Headlam, however, asserts that such a theory, so far as he is able to judge, was not held at all in the early Church. He regards it, if I understand him rightly, as a distinctively modern theory of apostolical succession, which was popularized by the Tractarian Movement in the Church of England. I am not sure that in maintaining this Dr. Headlam does not somewhat overstate his case. What is true is that what Prof. Turner has called " succession language," where it is used by the Fathers, is employed in one or other of the two first senses distinguished by Dr. Headlam, and not in the third.

¹ Headlam, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 126.

If the importance of episcopal ordination was not expressed in terms of the *language* of apostolical succession, it was because, at a time when no other system of ordination existed anywhere in Christendom, it was simply taken for granted. The essentials of the doctrine, as the Tractarians, for example, proclaimed it, were expressed simply by saying, in what came to be the technical language of theology, that a bishop is the proper minister of ordination. The real reason, I think, why Dr. Headlam is so anxious to brush aside the doctrine of apostolical succession in the sense of a succession from ordainer to ordained is because, like other people, he is repelled by certain negative inferences which have been drawn from it. What he wishes to avoid is the assertion that non-episcopal forms of ministry are invalid, a statement which is certainly apt to sound both offensive and lacking in charity. Technically, no doubt, it is true that non-episcopal forms of ministry *are* invalid from the standpoint of historical Christianity, as expressed in terms of a doctrine of orders which was worked out and formulated at a time when non-episcopal Christianity did not exist. In the modern world a number of varieties of non-episcopal Christianity do exist, and whatever their strength or weakness from a strictly historical point of view, they have shown both survival-value and vitality, and the Divine blessing has been manifestly upon them. No sensible person will dream of denying that their ministries and sacraments, however technically invalid or irregular, from the standpoint which I have just been trying to indicate, have in

experience been shown to be efficacious in mediating and building up a genuinely Christian life in all those who in sincerity and good faith have rightly used them, either on the grounds of inherited custom (that is, from the accident of having been born and brought up in some one or other of the denominations concerned), or on the grounds of reasoned principle (that is, from a deliberate conviction that the tenets and principles of such and such a denomination are more truly in accordance with the mind of Christ than any others).

Our modern problem, however, with regard to the Christian ministry is that of reunion; and the reunion of Christendom, if it is ever to be realized at all, must inevitably involve, as it seems to me, either the adoption of some one common and universally recognized form of ministry, or else (what is logically possible, but not, I think, practically conceivable) the abandonment by universal consent of all forms of official ministry whatsoever. Any ideal which is content to stop short of a common and universal system of ministry is not really, as it seems to me, an ideal of corporate reunion at all: it is the substitution for it either of indifferentism or of agreement to differ, which is merely the polite and Christian method of disagreeing.

If this be accepted, then I confess I do not see the remotest prospect or practical possibility of Christendom as a whole ever coming to be reunited, from the standpoint of ministry, upon any other basis but that of historical episcopacy. I would venture to quote some wise words of the present Dean of Wells.

“ We see,” he writes, “ perhaps more clearly than we saw before that the Christian Ministry was gradually evolved, in response to fresh needs which came with new conditions, as the Church grew in numbers and enlarged its geographical boundaries. We find that a Threefold Ministry emerges, which has proved itself capable of satisfying the wants of the Christian Church from the second century to the present day. Not that the functions of ministry have always been distributed in exactly the same proportion between bishops, priests and deacons ; each office has had an evolution of its own, and at the present moment the diaconate has, at least in the Western Church, fallen strangely into the background. But the whole framework remains, the permanent gift of the Divine Spirit to the Church.

“ We cannot go back, if we would, to the immaturity of primitive days. We need now, as much as the sub-apostolic age needed, a ministry which can hold the whole Church together. We cannot accept a congregational independence, which subordinates the minister, and which aims at offering examples of corporate life on a limited scale without reference to the larger corporate life of the One Body of the Christ. Such examples indeed are of value as representing the truth that each group or community of Christians is *pro tanto* representative of the One Body ; and, indeed, the corporate life is more easily exemplified on the smaller scale. Analogies might be found in the separate churches of Corinth and Ephesus, if it were possible to forget St. Paul. But we cannot be content with any system of local

independence, on however large a scale, which tries to live, so to speak, in the apostolic age without the unifying control of the Apostles.

“It is for the unity of the whole that the Historic Threefold Ministry stands. It grew out of the need for preservation of unity when the Apostles themselves were withdrawn. It is, humanly speaking, inconceivable that unity can be re-established on any other basis. This is not to say that a particular doctrine of Apostolic Succession must needs be held by all Christians alike. But the principle of transmission of ministerial authority makes for unity, while the view that ministry originates afresh at the behest of a particular church or congregation makes for division and subdivision.”¹

The problem of the ministry as affecting the question of reunion is far more essentially practical than it is theoretical. What would clearly be needed in practice, with a view to reunion, would be a regularization of the status and function of all ministers henceforward, without prejudice to the spiritual efficacy of their past ministrations. But this *must* mean, I think, the bestowal, in cases where it is lacking, of authorization, as authorization is understood by the Church as a whole. That seems to me to be essentially the meaning of the recent appeal of the Bishops at Lambeth. It does mean, I think, the acceptance, not of the accidents (such as prelacy, autocracy, palaces and state appointments) but of the essence of historical episcopacy by Christendom in general. The mere recognition of ministers by

¹ *The Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, pp. 91-92.

mutual consent, which is often advocated, as we know, as an alternative solution, does not seem to me possible: for *as what* are they to be recognized? Let me illustrate by reference to the case between England and Rome. The Church of Rome does not recognize the validity of Anglican orders; but supposing a day were to come when the Pope changed his mind, or alternatively agreed that henceforth, in the interests of unity, no technical questions with regard to regularity or validity of orders should be raised. The way would then lie open to mutual recognition of ministries as between England and Rome, and presumably Anglican bishops would be recognized by the Church of Rome as being bishops, Anglican priests as being priests, Anglican deacons as being deacons. Failing such recognition, I confess that I think that the obvious expedient, supposing all other outstanding difficulties in the way of reunion with Rome had been overcome, would be conditional ordination according to the Roman rite, but without prejudice to the spiritual efficacy of past Anglican ministrations. But now consider an analogous case as between Anglicans and Free Churchmen. We are to suppose it to be agreed that all scruples about regularity and validity of ministry are to be waived. We are then asked to recognize the ministers of the various Free Church denominations—as what? As ministers of their various denominations? Yes. As ministers of Christ, accredited by their fruits? Yes. But not precisely as what the Church historically understands as bishops, as priests, or as deacons. For plainly the

Free Church minister is not precisely, and does not in function precisely represent in his own denomination, any one of the three. He is the representative of a different system of ministry, and of a different conception of ministry altogether. You cannot, as it seems to me, even if all other questions were out of the way, amalgamate, by a simple process of mutual exchange, a onefold with a threefold system of ministry. The problem is not so simple as this, and it cannot, I think, be solved along these lines.

I come back to the question of episcopacy, and reassert my belief that it is on the basis of the historic episcopate that, so far as the system of ministry in the Church is concerned, the problem of Christian reunion will eventually, without prejudice to the conscience of anybody, be solved. If anyone cares to assert, as many Free Churchmen are sometimes prepared to assert, that episcopacy is indeed of the *bene esse* of the Church of Christ, but not of its *esse* ; and if by that they mean that experience has shown that it is possible for a vigorous church life, though not for a united church life, to exist without episcopacy, they are asserting what is both true and important, and also (if their words are meant seriously) what with a view to reunion is surely sufficient. For no Christian is going to be content with the ideal of a Church reunited on any lines short of the best : we must be able to predicate of the Church of the future not simple existence, but genuine well-being ; and so far as it is possible to forecast the future, I venture to submit that

episcopacy, which did prove for centuries the basis of a universal Christian ministry in the past, is in essentials adapted to form the basis, in the providence of God, of an equally universal system of Christian ministry in the future.

CHAPTER III

SACRAMENTS AND SACRAMENTALISM

SACRAMENTALISM I would venture to define as the general principle of the mediation of the spiritual by the material. So defined, it is a principle the operation of which is exemplified not only in the particular context of the specific sacraments of Christianity, but in the general context of human life and human experience as a whole. So long, that is, as man's life is lived here upon this planet, incarnate in a bodily organism, conditioned outwardly by sense, and related to a world of objects in space and time, so long, I think, it is true to say that his experience is sacramental.

For, on the one hand, man lives in a world of spiritual meanings, a world which is at once intelligible and significant ; and no philosophy can claim to be adequate which does not interpret existence ultimately in terms of spirit. On the other hand, there is a physical basis to all that man does and to all that he experiences ; it is ultimately, as I believe, the whole function and meaning of matter to express and mediate and be the vehicle of spirit ; but whether that be the final account of matter or no, it is certainly a true description of a function which matter in relation to spirit does actually fulfil. I speak to you, and if the experiment is successful,

meaning is mediated and conveyed, so that the thoughts and ideas which I have in my mind are communicated to the minds of you who hear me. But this desirable result is accomplished not by any process of direct telepathy, but by means of a wholly physical process of brain changes, nervous reactions, movements of vocal chords, sound waves and corresponding vibrations of your ear drums, leading to further nervous reactions and brain changes ultimately in you. Nothing, to my thinking, is more remarkable or more mysterious than this process, whereby what is in itself merely a series of physical changes from brain to brain becomes the medium of a communication of ideas from mind to mind. For the two, considered apart from one another, appear so utterly unrelated. What possible connection could be imagined *a priori* between mind and thought on the one hand, and the brain and its changes on the other? The one is spiritual, the other material; and we are apt, when we consider them in isolation, to regard matter and spirit as simply antithetical and opposed. But we are wrong to consider them thus in isolation, for they are twin elements in our experience, related to one another in such a way that the one becomes, at least in some contexts, the vehicle and medium of the other. For my own part I confess that my inclination is to define matter in all contexts as being essentially the instrument of spirit, the medium of communication at once between God and finite spirits, and between finite spirits and one another. On such a view all things material are sacramental.

The world of Nature becomes, in Goethe's phrase, God's living garment ; its beauty a sacrament of the celestial beauty, its ordered harmony a sacrament of the eternal Wisdom, of the one supreme and creative Mind and Will.

Words, on this view, are sacraments, and so are actions, especially such actions as convey a symbolic significance which goes beyond what is intrinsic to the mere action, considered simply in itself : a symbolic sign, a significant gesture, a state ceremonial, an academic gown—life is full of such symbolism, movements of bodies in space and time, things that they do, clothes that they wear, which express, not in word, but in act or suggestion, or, it may be, by customary association of ideas, a meaning which in some cases could be equally well expressed otherwise (for example, in words), but in others could not. Considered simply from this point of view and from no other, the specific sacramental usages of Christianity, coming down to us, as they do, out of the past, and charged therefore with the mysteriously suggestive potency of accumulated association and experience, are at least well fitted to serve as the expressive symbolism of the peculiarly rich and manifold tradition of spiritual life in Christ, which is our proper inheritance in the Christian Church.

I have approached the subject, in the first instance, from this particular angle, because I think it is only in the light of such a generally sacramental view of life and of the material universe as I have ventured to indicate, that the specific sacramental rites of

Christianity become intelligible. I do not think it is possible to limit the number of the sacraments, in the widest and most historical sense of that term, either to two, or to seven, or (with Hugo of St. Victor) to thirty. Sacraments proper shade off into what in the language of traditional Western theology were called *sacramentals* (a term which was applied, for example, to describe such a rite as that of the anointing of kings): "sacramentals" in turn shade off into ordinary symbolism, whether social, or civic, or military, or simply artistic. And thus far I have been expounding a doctrine with which I think it is likely that all will agree: for I have simply been engaged in pointing out that the use of symbolism in religion is, so far, on all fours with its use in life generally, that matter and form can be the vehicle of spirit, and that social ceremonial, especially if it be traditional and charged with associations, may be deeply suggestive. And perhaps it may be said that, along such lines as these, it is possible to reach a fairly adequate account of a good deal of inherited religious ceremonial and symbolism—an adequate theory, let us say, of "sacramentals." I do not believe that we have yet reached an adequate theory of "sacraments." Not, indeed, that I think the distinction between "sacramentals" and "sacraments" amounts to a distinction in kind: I have implied my belief that it does not, or at least that, if formal distinctions are drawn, there are borderline cases. What I mean is that I think there are some at least of the sacramental rites of historic Christianity, for which the theory of

sacraments thus far developed does not appear adequate.

For we have been considering the sacraments, thus far, almost wholly from the standpoint of man. We have been comparing them, for example, with other forms of social ceremonial, both religious and secular; we have been considering them as symbolical media of spiritual expression, suggestive because of the meanings which men have read into them, and of the associations which have gathered about them in the course of their history. But the Church has, in point of fact, seen, in her principal sacraments, much more than this. It has been held, and I share the conviction, that there is involved in them not merely the action of man, but the action of God through the Spirit. On this view it is not merely the case that in certain social ceremonies and symbolical rites of the Christian religion, commonly called sacraments, man seeks and aspires after God, but that God, through the medium of sacraments, comes to meet man. Why, indeed, should He not? Why should not matter, which is the instrument and vehicle of spirit in man's intercourse with man, be here also, in this supreme way, made the vehicle and instrument of God's grace and of the activity of His energizing Spirit in relation to man? It is matter of experience that the great Christian sacraments do operate in this fashion as the media and channels of God's grace, and I can see no sort of force in the proposal to explain what occurs as due merely to auto-suggestion, though I foresee that the attempt will be made in the near future to explain

in this fashion, not merely the Christian experience of sacraments, but the practice of prayer, and the facts of religion in general. Of course, it is plain that suggestion is a factor which operates, in prayer and in sacraments, in religion, and in human life generally : but this does not amount, in the one case any more than in the others, either to a complete or to an ultimate account of what happens ; it does not, any more than any other scientific account which throws light on a part of God's method of working, eliminate God.

For my own part I adhere, speaking broadly, to the Catholic view of the sacraments, that is, to the view which in general is held by the major proportion of Christendom. I see in them not magic but symbolism, but on the other hand not simply a suggestive but an efficacious symbolism : not merely the expressive symbols of spiritual meaning, but the effectual symbols of divine grace, the media of the spiritual power of God. And by an effectual symbol I mean a symbol which, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, effectuates that which it symbolizes. Thus I believe, for example, that in Baptism the water of an outward washing is, in a more than theoretical sense, the sacrament of an inward cleansing ; that Baptism does not merely symbolize, but effectuates, a change of status in relation to God and to His Church. So again, I believe that the laying on of hands, with prayer, which is the outward form in Confirmation, or again in the sacrament of Holy Orders, does not only symbolize, but mediates, such spiritual gifts as are needed for the proper discharge

of the functions respectively of layman and minister in the Church of Christ ; I believe that in what is technically known as the sacrament of Penance the words of absolution are in similar fashion a real means of grace, actually mediating to the penitent the reality of forgiveness and reconciliation alike with God and with the Christian Society, and that in the Eucharist the outward elements of bread and wine become the actual vehicles of the spiritual Presence of Him who is at once the object of the Church's worship and the spiritual food and drink of Christian souls. In all these various ways I believe the greater sacraments of Christianity to be, each in its manner and degree, effectual channels of the grace of God, and not merely aids to the imagination, symbols of corporate aspiration, or potent occasions of spiritual self-suggestion.

But while thus affirming, in technical language, the objective efficacy of sacraments as channels and media of the grace of God, I would not have it supposed either that I deny, on the one hand, that the grace of God can be, and often is, received apart from sacraments, or affirm, on the other, that the grace which the sacraments mediate is, or can be, effective independently of the spiritual disposition of the recipient. It would manifestly be absurd to suppose that the activities of Divine grace were confined or limited to sacramental channels ; it would be equally absurd to deny that people can, and do, participate in sacraments without any spiritual profit accruing to their souls. All that is meant, in this latter case, by the doctrine of the

objective efficacy of sacraments is that the sacrament is nevertheless, in itself, truly a sacrament, though in the particular instance it is profaned: that the responsibility for the failure of the sacrament in such a case to bear its proper fruit is on the side of man and not of God. I do not believe that the Church, or that any churchman, has ever maintained or believed that the sacraments were effective by a process of automatic magic. There is a phrase which is frequently quoted in this connection, and misunderstood, as I believe, by those who suppose it to bear that meaning—I mean the phrase *ex opere operato*. The phrase itself is not ancient, but mediæval. It is a technical term of scholastic theology, and as used by theologians it is contrasted with the correlative phrase *ex opere operantis*. By the *opus operantis* is meant the act of the minister in celebrating the sacrament, by the *opus operatum* the sacrament itself which he celebrates; and the statement that sacraments convey grace *ex opere operato*, and not merely *ex opere operantis*, means simply, I think, what is otherwise expressed in one of the Articles of the Church of England by the statement that the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the effect of the sacrament. It is a preservative against that utterly false sacerdotalism which, if it were true, would make our spiritual life, in so far as it is mediated by sacraments, dependent upon the personal character of the clergy who minister to us in sacred things. It is an assertion, in short, that in the sacraments the priest is nothing, and that God is everything. It is *not* an assertion that sacraments

convey grace by the mere fact of their reception, altogether irrespective of our own spiritual attitude towards them.

Let me next say a few words about the distinction, so commonly drawn, between Baptism and the Eucharist, as "the two great sacraments of the Gospel," and other so-called lesser sacraments and sacramentals. The distinction is not, as I think, one of very great value. It dates, so far as I know, from the Reformation, and is based on a favourite idea of the Reformers, viz., that the two sacraments in question were "generally necessary to salvation" and "instituted by Christ Himself," in a sense in which others were not. Both these points, as I think, have been gravely affected by criticism. In what sense are the sacraments "generally necessary to salvation"? Not, surely, in a sense which would exclude the "salvation" of Quakers! In what sense were they historically "instituted by Christ Himself"? Who shall say?

No doubt, if the records are read quite uncritically, and with later developments in mind, then indeed it is possible to take St. Matt. xxviii. 19, and the various accounts of the Last Supper in the Gospels, as representing accounts of the institution respectively of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. But with a little goodwill it would be possible to claim equally St. John xx. 22-23 as an "institution" by the Risen Jesus of the sacraments of Holy Orders and of Penance, and the statement of St. Mark vi. 13 that the disciples sent out by Jesus on a mission "anointed with oil many that were sick" as an

institution of the sacrament of Unction. On the other hand, if the Gospels are read in a critical spirit and interpreted historically, it is impossible to leave altogether out of account the possibility that words ascribed to the Risen Jesus in the closing chapters of St. Matthew and St. John may represent rather what "the Spirit" had "said to the Churches" in apostolic times than any literally authentic saying of Christ: and though doubtless it is the case that the Eucharist did, in all probability, develop, as a matter of history, out of something that our Lord was reported to have said and done at the Last Supper,¹ and though a reference back to the events of the Last Supper has always been a part, though not the whole, of what the Eucharist has meant, it does not follow that we can ever know, with any assurance, precisely what was in our Lord's human mind about it, as a matter of history, at the time; or that it would be of any particular importance if we could. The sacraments, as I think, are to be interpreted not in the light of their historical origins (about which in most cases, to be frank, we know singularly little), but rather in the light of what they have come to be, and of the part which they have actually played in the life of the Church. The "things which the Spirit saith to the Churches" may be as important, from this point of view, as the remembered utterances of Christ Himself.

As a matter of fact, the process of development within the Christian Society both of sacramental

¹ The view of some scholars that it originated in a "revelation" made to St. Paul seems quite improbable.

institutions and of sacramental theory was, upon any view, a rapid one. Personally I am in agreement with those scholars who find already a fully-developed sacramentalism in the writings of St. Paul and of "St. John." I think Professor Kirsopp Lake is right when he remarks that the controversial appeal of Protestant theologians in support of their views about sacraments to primitive Christianity has failed, and that "the Catholic doctrine is much more nearly primitive than the Protestant." When, however, he adds that "the Catholic advocate, in winning his case, has proved still more: the type of doctrine which he defends is not only primitive, but pre-Christian,"¹ the statement needs qualification. Admittedly there are usages analogous to the Christian sacraments in a variety of pre-Christian cults, since the history of institutional religion in the world is a long one. Admittedly also in the New Testament period a doctrine of salvation by means of "sacraments" of a quasi-magical kind was being proclaimed by a variety of competing religions. The recognition of the external resemblances between Christian and pagan sacraments is no modern discovery—Justin Martyr, for example, notices the similarities in outward usage between the Christian Eucharist and certain ceremonies in the mysteries of Mithras.² It does not follow either that sacramen-

¹ Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 215.

² Justin Martyr, *Apology*, I, lxvi. 4. Justin's own theory of the matter is that "the evil demons imitated" the sacraments of the Gospel. In actual fact no doubt the Mithraic usages are independent of the Christian, and are probably earlier in point of date.

talism came into Christianity from paganism, or that there was no difference of inward character between sacraments pagan and Christian. My own view is that the pagan sacraments were always more or less coloured by the associations of magic, and that the Christian sacraments, being set in the context of a worthier theology, and involving a different conception of God, were free from this taint. I do not, of course, mean that the Christian sacraments have never in the history of the Church been regarded by individuals as possessing a magical efficacy; I mean that such a view of them, wherever it exists, is essentially sub-Christian, and that the attempt has been made in official teaching from St. Paul's time onwards to guard Christians against it.

Let me end this lecture by referring very briefly to certain particular Christian sacraments in detail. I take first Baptism, the initiation-ceremony or entrance-rite of the Christian Society. In this ceremony the water in which the neophyte is immersed, or which (in later usage and in colder climates) is poured upon his head, is interpreted by the Church as the effectual symbol of a new status upon which he then enters both in relation to itself and in relation to God; that is to say, by becoming a member of the Redeemed Society he becomes a potential inheritor of all those spiritual blessings which are mediated to mankind corporately in Christ Jesus. In the earliest usage there is reason to think that Baptism may have been simply into the Name of Jesus¹; from a period not later than that at which the Gospel

¹ Acts ii. 38, viii. 16, x. 48, etc.

according to St. Matthew was compiled the triune Name of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has been invoked.¹ "The general meaning of the ordinance," writes a modern German scholar, "may be inferred from the fact that it was the act of reception into the community of those who believed in Jesus. It betokened acceptance both of the obligations and of the privileges of membership, acknowledgment of Jesus as the coming Messiah, earnest preparation for the Kingdom by repentance and life according to Jesus' commandments, the hope of participation in the Kingdom of God, freedom and protection from the power of Satan and his hosts, and especially also (compare John's Baptism) the washing away of sins. . . . The naming of the Name of Jesus in Baptism had also a deep significance: the baptized person was thereby sealed or marked henceforward as the personal property of Jesus Christ."²

What Baptism meant in the experience of early Christian converts was expressed in the phrase "new birth"; they felt that a new life had begun in them, and that the heathen past was dead and buried. The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is the generalization of this in principle: it expresses the conviction that every Christian as such is the subject of "birth from above"³ as a child of God. It came to be extended by analogy, with the rest of the theology of Baptism, from the case of the Baptism of adults to that of the Baptism of infants, when the

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Heitmüller, *Taufe und Abendmahl im Urchristentum*, pp. 11-12.

³ John iii. 3, 7 (R.V. marg.).

custom became general of "bringing young children to Christ." The Church felt that from all points of view it was fitting and right that the children of Christian homes should be brought up from infancy as from within, and not as from without, the Christian Society, and the terminology of Baptismal Regeneration still expresses the status, thereby bestowed, of membership in the regenerate community; though this obviously remains little more than a bare status, until both its obligations are recognized and its privileges appropriated by the maturing consciousness of the child at a later stage. The system of godparents is an attempt to secure that Baptism shall not be bestowed without a real prospect and pledge of subsequent Christian training and spiritual education. It must be acknowledged that the system of Infant Baptism as at present practised in the Church is in many cases a mere travesty of this ideal, and that many are baptized who are not Christianly brought up. The Church holds that, even so, Baptism need not, and indeed, strictly speaking, cannot be repeated; that what is needed is the instruction, spiritual conversion and repentance of the individuals concerned, in order that they may truly enter upon the religious inheritance which in virtue of Baptism they have the undoubted right to claim.

Closely associated with Baptism in early Christianity was Confirmation, a sacrament which, as a matter of fact, historically originated in a differentiation of certain usages, which in early practice formed part of the ritual accompanying Baptism, from the

sacrament of Baptism proper. In some early rituals anointing with oil, in others laying on of hands, and in others both, seem to have been ceremonies following immediately upon Baptism. In accordance with this, what is now called Confirmation is to-day administered in the Eastern Church by anointing, in the Anglican Church by laying on of hands, and in the Roman Church by both ceremonies combined.¹ In Western, moreover, though not in Eastern usage, Confirmation is now commonly separated from Baptism (with which it was originally combined) by a period of years, and in practice has come to form rather a preliminary to First Communion than a sequel to Baptism; advantage being taken of this postponement to prefix to Confirmation, by way of preparation, a course of instruction in the essentials of Christian faith and practice, and (in the Church of England) to prefix also to the actual confirmation proper a solemn and public acceptance, on the part of the candidate, of the obligations and implications of Christian Baptism. It is obvious that in view of this somewhat complicated history no very cut-and-dried theology of Confirmation is possible without what a Roman Catholic writer describes as a certain "adjustment of theory to historical fact."² What may truly be said of the rite in all its forms is that its purpose is the solemn invocation of the gifts of

¹ Strictly speaking, what a Roman Bishop does is to extend his hands over the group of candidates generally, while saying certain prayers, and afterwards to anoint each of the candidates separately with oil on the forehead.

² Fr. Herbert Thurston, S.J., in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. *Confirmation* (*Roman Catholic*).

the Holy Spirit with a view to the *confirmatio* or strengthening of the Christian in the spiritual warfare to which, as a member of Christ's Church, he is committed ; and that, so regarded, it is a sacramental means of grace to such as receive it rightly, besides standing, as it does in specifically Western usage, as a rite connoting adult status and conscious membership in the Church. I do not myself think that the episode of Acts viii. 14 *seq.*, is historically the origin of Confirmation, except in the limited sense that the Anglican service of Confirmation is obviously modelled upon it as a sort of Biblical precedent. It is perhaps worth adding that the Confirmation prayer in the Church of England service is not that the persons confirmed may be made magically perfect, but that they may "daily increase" in the Holy Spirit "more and more."

About Penance, or Absolution, considered as a sacrament, I do not propose to speak at any great length. What it effects is the reconciliation, both with God and with the Church, of a Christian who has fallen into sin and is repentant. It mediates in the first place the forgiveness of the Christian Brotherhood, and involves therefore the recognition that sin on the part of a Christian has a social aspect as involving the community, and is not merely a private or individual affair between the soul and God—a point which, I think, will be grasped by any one who reflects upon the manner in which the spiritual effectiveness of Christianity in the world is impaired by the failures of professing Christians to walk worthily of their profession ; and it mediates, in the

second place, the forgiveness of God, on the principle that the Church has authority from Christ through the Spirit to declare in God's name the Divine Gospel of forgiveness to such as truly repent. The making of explicit confession, actually and definitely in words, of specific offences committed, or of ways in which the soul knows itself to have fallen short of the ideal standards of Christian perfection, is an act of spiritual honesty and candour both before God, and also before the Church as symbolically represented by an appointed minister (in practice, either a bishop or a priest). The bestowal of absolution has the effect of sealing to the penitent the assurance of forgiveness on the part of both. With regard to the necessity of this sacrament, the Church of Rome, which is strictest in discipline, regards resort to it as indispensable only in cases of what is known as mortal sin (defined as wilful and deliberate sin in a grave matter) ; the practice of Eastern Christendom appears to involve, as a normal rule, the making of such confession on the part of the faithful about three or four times in the year. The Church of England, while making provision for the practice of confession, does not enforce any obligatory discipline in the matter, except in cases of such open and notorious evil living as create overt scandal. The practice of voluntary confession, whether with a view to the quieting of conscience in cases of grave sin, or, more generally, with a view to the deepening and development of the spiritual life on a basis of more searching and disciplined reality, is notoriously growing more widespread among Anglicans, and I believe it to be,

in the majority of cases, of high value. I think it provides what may be described as a periodical spiritual purge, which operates as a means of deliverance from introspective brooding and spiritual morbidity, and tends to prevent the initial formation of many of those "repressed complexes" with which our friends the psycho analysts are so busily concerned. At the present moment there is serious danger of large numbers of persons coming hastily to the conclusion that they will be useless to God and man until they have been psycho-analysed: and in some cases they are tempted to submit themselves, very rashly, to the experiments of amateur practitioners of that art. I think that the practice of sacramental confession is, as often as not, the proper remedy for all these megrims; and that recourse should be had to the psycho-analyst only in such cases as there is reason to think are definitely pathological. What is needed, in the majority of cases, is that the soul should be purged of sin, rather than simply cured of some imaginary psychological disease. At the same time I do not wish to be understood as suggesting that confession is valuable primarily or mainly for spiritual neurotics. I think the bracing discipline of honest confession is likely to be periodically good for most people who are led to practice it in sincerity and truth.¹

The only remaining sacrament of which I wish in particular to speak is that of the Eucharist. I have

¹ Dr. W. Brown, Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy at Oxford, allows me to say that he fully endorses, from the psychological point of view, the statements made in the above paragraph on the subject of confession.

already said that I believe the Eucharist to have been developed historically out of what our Lord said and did at the Last Supper, and that a reference back to the events of the Last Supper has always been a part of its significance. The Eucharist is a commemoration of the Christ on the brink of His Passion—His supreme act of consecrated self-sacrifice on behalf of men; but it is more. It is an act of spiritual fellowship, perpetually renewed, with the Risen Christ who is victorious over death. It is still true that the Risen Lord is made known to His disciples in the Breaking of the Bread. I am among those who believe that there is manifested in this sacrament a Real Presence of the Christ, discerned but not created by Christian faith. I believe that the Bread embodies Him in the sense that it mediates His Spirit, that the Wine is His Blood in the sense that it is the vehicle of His life. I believe the sixth chapter of St. John to be a true commentary upon the spiritual meaning of Holy Communion as a feeding of men's souls and bodies with the true and heavenly Bread. St. Paul, too, has an essentially similar doctrine: he regards the Eucharist as "spiritual"—that is, as supernatural—"food" and "drink," comparing it with the manna and the water from the Rock, supposed in Hebrew legend to have supernaturally sustained the Israelites. Or again, he compares and contrasts it with the sacrificial meals of contemporary pagan cults and brotherhoods—the "table of the Lord" is contrasted with that of "demons." And yet once more he regards it as the Feast of Holy Fellowship—"We that are

many, are one Bread, one Body, for we all partake of the one [Eucharistic] Bread."

There are other and complementary points of view from which the Holy Communion can be regarded—for example, as the sacrament and mainspring of the life of service—"Break your bodies in union with My Body broken: give your lives in sacrifice, as I have given Mine": or again, as the Church's great act of corporate intercession in the power of Christ crucified; or yet once more, as the Church's act of self-devotion and self-consecration, which she is bold to make only as under the shadow of Christ's own eternal self-devotion and oblation of Himself—which is the essence of what is meant by the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. I will only add that the potential significance of the Eucharist does not seem to me to be exhausted by any one of these ways of looking at it; that as it is at once the most solemn and the most characteristic form of Christian worship, so also I believe it to be at once the most dramatic and the most intelligible, and therefore (prejudice apart) the best suited to be the vehicle of the plain man's worship, provided only that he be an instructed Christian. I think that every Christian should be a regular communicant; but—granted this—I see no reason why he should not be present at the celebration of the Eucharist at other times than those at which he personally communicates; and since the sacrament has come to have, in actual Christian practice, a manifold further significance, going beyond what is involved in the act of communion, on the part of this or that individual, on this

or that occasion, I see no reason why the celebration should not be occasionally specialized with other intentions and for other purposes than that of a general communion of the Christian people. To any one who does not fully know, and who would care to discover in some degree, the wealth of spiritual riches discoverable in the Eucharist as interpreted by the Catholic tradition, I would venture to suggest a reference in the first place to Miss Evelyn Underhill's chapter on "The Witness of the Liturgy" in her book *The Mystic Way*,¹ and in the second place to Father W. Roche's little book, *Mysteries of the Mass in Reasoned Prayers*. Both of these are spiritual studies based, as it happens, upon the Roman Mass, and Fr. Roche's book in particular needs occasional adaptation for those who are not Roman Catholics. But the same principles of interpretation which these books apply to the Liturgy of the Church of Rome are equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Liturgy of the Church of England, or to any other Christian Liturgy which follows, in a broad sense, the traditional Catholic lines.

¹ I should wish, however, to dissociate myself from the recognition of a sort of spiritual aristocracy of elect mystics, for whom the "inner mysteries" are reserved—an idea which appears on pp. 342-3 of Miss Underhill's book.

CHAPTER IV

INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION is an idea which has a long history behind it, the beginnings of which may be traced back into very early times. The earlier of the two accounts in the Book of Genesis of the creation of man, which may go back in its present written form to the ninth century B.C., tells how "Yahweh God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Here the breath, which issues from the nostrils, is regarded as the principle of life—a very natural idea, since to the most cursory observation it is the most obvious difference between a living animal's body and a corpse that the former emits breath, and the latter does not. Yahweh, God of the Hebrews, was most characteristically thought of by His worshippers as being pre-eminently alive, and the source of life: "the living God" is one of his commonest titles, and "as Yahweh liveth" was a favourite form of Hebrew oath. Since Yahweh was alive, it was inferred that he, too, had a "breath" or "spirit": and the presence of the "breath of life" in man was explained by the early cosmologist as being due to the fact of Yahweh having "breathed into" or inspired with breath the first-made man, who until then had been only a lifeless clay figure. There was therefore in

man, according to Hebrew ideas, what a Latin writer describes as *divinæ particulam auræ*, "a particle of divine breath." Man is made, in the phrase of the later Hebrew cosmologist, to whom we owe the account of the Creation in the *first* chapter of Genesis, "in the image of God." Breath or spirit, then, is the prerogative of all living things; but man in particular, according to Hebrew ideas, is akin to God, though a creature of God, inasmuch as there is in him an element of the *divine* "breath."

But this thought, however ancient, was not invariably prominent in the Hebrew mind. Certainly man appears, if not absolutely, at least in a relative sense, as an independent centre of activity, and the originator of his own sayings and doings. They proceed from his character, and are the expression of what he is; and so long as his behaviour is normal, they call for no comment and are not felt to require any special explanation. But what if a man's behaviour is *not* normal? What if he behaves strangely? The legendary strength of a Samson, for example, was plainly not a normal human endowment. It was explained by saying that he was inspired, that he had experienced a special access of the Divine "Spirit." We read that "the Spirit of Yahweh began to stir"¹ Samson, that "the Spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon him."² I need not quote further instances; it is clear that we have here an early example of the way in which the idea of a special inspiration of particular individual men by the Divine Spirit first

¹ Judg. xiii. 25.

² Judg. xiv. 6.

grew up. The idea arose by way of an hypothesis, an explanation or theory, which was invoked from very early times to account for what was abnormal in human behaviour. Nor was such an idea at all confined to the Hebrews. It was natural in early times to explain any behaviour of an extraordinary kind—any activity, for example, which appeared to transcend the capacity of a man's normal powers, any strange mood, above all such phenomena as those of madness, ecstasy or frenzy, any kind of unusually exalted enthusiasm—as being the result of the possession of the agent by a “spirit” other than his own. The very word which I have just used—“enthusiasm”—illustrates this: it is a Greek word descriptive of the state of being *ἐνθεος*, “full of the god,” or inspired. The description in Virgil of the Cumæan Sibyl under the influence of such “inspiration” has been quoted many times—“As thus she spake before the doors, suddenly nor countenance nor colour was the same, nor stayed her tresses braided; but her bosom heaves, her heart swells with wild frenzy, and she is taller to behold, nor has her voice a mortal ring, since now she feels the nearer breath of deity.”¹ Prophetic frenzy among the Hebrews in early times was not dissimilar: the “sons of the prophets,” mentioned in the Books of Samuel and

1

Cui talia fanti

ante fores subito non voltus, non color unus,
 non comptae mansere comae, sed pectus anhelum,
 et rabie fœra corda tument, maiorque videri
 nec mortale sonans, adflata est numine quando
 iam propiore dei—Virg., *Æn.*, vi, 46-51.

The quotation in the text is from H. R. Fairclough's translation in the *Loeb Classical Library*.

Kings, who were encouraged and fostered, apparently, by such personages as Samuel,¹ Elijah and Elisha,² but from whom at a somewhat later date Amos rather scornfully dissociates himself,³ were essentially just bands of Hebrew dervishes who excited themselves by means of music⁴ and dancing⁵ to a state of "prophetic" frenzy not easily distinguishable *prima facie* from madness. We find prophets occasionally described as being "mad"⁶ in Hebrew literature, or referred to as "mad fellows"⁷: and conversely David feigns madness as a means of self-protection at the court of Achish, King of Gath,⁸ since a madman was regarded as being, as such, inspired, and therefore sacrosanct; he was manifestly under the protection of some powerful spirit, and must not be harmed.

All this is perfectly simple and naïve; abnormal psychology, just because it *is* abnormal, strikes early man as strange, uncanny, and supernatural. Indeed in extreme cases, such as those of trance or of somnambulism, automatic writing, automatic speech, dissociated personality, etc., in which the controlling and directing power of the self or "ego" of the subject seems for the time being to be in abeyance, the hypothesis of possession has in all ages presented itself to the mind of the plain man as being the obvious explanation of the facts. Spontaneous auto-suggestion, visual, auditory or tactual hallucinations, effects within consciousness of subconscious

¹ 1 Sam. xix. 20.

² 2 Kings ii. 3 *seq.*

³ Amos vii. 14.

⁴ 1 Sam. x. 5.

⁵ 1 Sam. xix. 23, 24; 2 Sam. vi. 14-16.

⁶ Hosea ix. 7.

⁷ 2 Kings ix. 11.

⁸ 1 Sam. xxi. 12-15.

activities of mind, may be the fashionable phrases of contemporary scientific psychology; mediumistic phenomena, intimations from the spirit world, materializations and levitation may be the jargon of contemporary superstition; the actual phenomena are of a kind which have recurred from time to time throughout history, and have persistently been interpreted by the popular mind in terms of some form of supernaturalism.

Quite apart, however, from extreme cases, and short of anything which might seem to amount to actual possession or invasion of the personality by some alien "spirit," it is clear that in early times any kind of unusual activity involving what might appear to be superhuman insight, wisdom or prowess, was looked upon as being due to the activity of a spirit other than the agent's own, co-operating with *his* spirit, influencing, helping and enabling him; and within the sphere of Hebrew religion all such phenomena tended naturally to be ascribed without question, at least in early times, to the agency of the Spirit of Yahweh. Thus, for example, the moodiness which beset King Saul, who suffered, apparently, from periodic melancholia, was accounted for by saying that "an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled him"¹; the bad advice given by the four hundred prophets consulted by King Ahab was accounted for by saying that Yahweh had sent a "lying spirit" to deceive them.² It is noteworthy, however, that even in these early examples, the "evil spirit" and the "lying spirit" are apparently distinguished

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 14-15.

² 1 Kings xxii. 20-3.

from Yahweh's own Spirit, though they are sent by Him and employed in His service, like the Satan in the Book of Job. Later Hebrew thought, influenced by the teaching of the prophets, came to recognize Jehovah as the author only of good.¹ The "Satan" or "Adversary" was dissociated from Yahweh's service. A luxuriant demonology characterized the later phases of Hebrew religious thought, but the demons now constitute an opposition element in Yahweh's universe, as contrasted with the angels who are His messengers and servants. Disease and madness as well as temptations to sin were regarded by the Jews of New Testament times, as the Synoptic Gospels make evident, as being the work of evil spirits, but the Messiah was their destined foe, and it was the function of the Holy Spirit to cast them out.

The Holy Spirit, moreover, or, as the Old Testament more commonly has it, the Spirit of Yahweh, was regarded as the Inspirer of Hebrew prophecy, as we may conclude from the saying of Micah, "I truly am full of power by the Spirit of Yahweh . . . to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."² Prophecy, as exemplified in the series of great prophets which begins with Amos, shook itself free from its earlier dervish associations and became less ecstatic and uncontrolled. In a few cases the prophets

¹ A saying such as that of Isaiah xlv. 7, "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I am Yahweh, that doeth all these things," which some regard as an implicit polemic against Zoroastrianism, does not refer to *moral* evil, but to calamity.

² Micah iii. 8.

claim to have seen visions, and probably did so : Ezekiel in particular seems to have been subject to trance and catalepsy, and certain others of the prophets appear to exhibit traces here and there of an abnormal psychology. But for the most part the utterances and writings of the greater prophets were not given to the world in trance or ecstasy, nor does their prophesying assume the form of uncontrolled frenzy. It is strongly marked, nevertheless, by the consciousness of inspiration. The prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh. The constantly recurring introductory formula, " Thus saith Yahweh," which has its parallel in the corresponding New Testament formula, " Thus saith the Holy Ghost," is evidence enough that those who thus spoke conceived themselves to be charged with a Divine message which those who heard must heed or disregard at their peril. The prophets did not regard themselves as being the originators of their own oracles. To their own consciousness the message presented itself as having been " given " to them. It is probable that in a large number of cases it was, in fact, no product of the working of their own conscious minds, and therefore they took the same view of it as external observers did. They conceived themselves to be inspired.

The difficulty was that prophets who thus claimed the authority of Divine inspiration for their messages did not invariably agree. We find frequent mention of a class of " false prophets " ; and there is no reason to suppose that those who are thus condemned, and who in some cases were the rivals and opponents of

prophets whose utterances, when reduced to writing, later on became canonical,¹ were invariably insincere. It is evident that a claim to Divine inspiration based simply upon what presents itself to the prophet's own consciousness as the conviction of a message having been given him to deliver cannot always be taken at its face value. A criterion was needed to distinguish between true prophecy and false, and mere psychological abnormality was no criterion, since "the subconscious," as modern psychology has it, may be the source not only of good but of evil.

There are passages in the Old Testament in which it is evident that men were feeling after such a criterion. Thus at a certain stage of Israel's history it is argued that the word of the Lord must of necessity to a sinful people be a message of woe. Prophets who prophesy "smooth things"² are to be set aside as false prophets upon that very ground.³ Or again, the prophets who are condemned as "false" are attacked on the ground of their personal character: they are mercenary, they prophesy for gain, etc.⁴ In Deuteronomy xviii. 22 the criterion of fulfilment is suggested—"When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh hath not spoken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him." On the other hand, the same book contains a warning against the possibility that a *false* prophet may "give a sign or a wonder"

Cf. especially Jeremiah xxviii.

² Isa. xxx. 10.

³ Jer. vi. 14, viii. 11.

⁴ Micah iii. 11; Ezek. xiii. 19, 21.

which may actually come to pass ; but if the *contents* of his message tend to idolatry, he is to be rejected : Yahweh is merely testing the loyalty of His people in such a case.¹ In like manner also Ezekiel speaks of the possibility that Yahweh Himself may “ deceive ” a prophet.²

The difficulty, moreover, with regard to the criterion of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the prophet's word is that the forecasts even of the canonical prophets with regard to the course of future events were by no means invariably fulfilled. The question of the so-called “ predictive ” element in prophecy is a difficult one. The prophets did make forecasts, and from time to time their forecasts were fulfilled. Are such cases to be explained as instances of literal prediction of the future—a kind of soothsaying or “ second-sight ”—or as mere coincidences, irrelevant, strictly speaking, to the real character of prophecy as a spiritual phenomenon ? There are scholars of repute who are disposed to believe that certain of the prophets were endowed with real psychic gifts, which involved the capacity for some kind of literal prevision of future events. The great difficulty of such a view is that it appears to involve a fatalistic view of history ; it pre-supposes that the future is, as it were, fixed beforehand and predestined to happen. For this reason I am personally sceptical about it. In any case, whatever may or may not be true in particular instances, the great bulk of prophetic utterances about the future appear to be more simply explicable as intuitive forecasts based

¹ Deut. xiii. 1-3.

² Ezek. xiv. 9.

not upon detailed foreknowledge, but upon the prophet's insight into the Divine mind and character, and therefore into the way in which the Divine Author of events might be expected to work in history—either in the near future, with reference to the immediate moral, political and religious situation in Israel, or in the great world-crisis or series of world-crises to which all history, according to the received doctrine of Hebrew religion, was leading up, and which it is a standing characteristic of the prophetic psychology to conceive as being immediately at hand. In these cases, certainly, what we have in prophecy is not "history written beforehand," but a prophetic vision of world-consummation, expressed in varying poetic and symbolic forms, which have a permanent value and significance for *all* times, precisely because they are *not* of necessity destined to be in literal detail fulfilled at *any* time.

The Old Testament writers never, in fact, succeeded in formulating a satisfactory external test of the truth of a prophetic message, or any satisfactory external criterion of prophetic inspiration, for the reason that no such external test or criterion is, in the nature of things, capable of being formulated. In New Testament times precisely the same problem arose with regard to the phenomenon of prophecy in the Christian Church. A criterion was needed to distinguish between the competing claims of Christian prophets whose utterances conflicted, but who claimed equally the inspiration of the Spirit, and presented in equal degree the outward symptoms of prophetic exaltation. St. Paul ranks the capacity to

distinguish between spirit and spirit as being itself a distinctive gift or *charisma* of the Holy Spirit, and in 1 Cor. ii. 14, he lays down the true principle, viz., that spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

The fact is that psychological abnormality is not necessarily a mark of the Divine. The idea and terminology of inspiration may have been originally invoked, as we have seen, with a view to providing what appeared to be a naïvely plausible explanation of whatever was manifestly abnormal in human psychology, and taken literally in its original sense the idea of inspiration is crudely animistic. God has no literal "breath," nor does He "breathe" Himself literally into men. Still less does He obsess them in such a fashion as to override their individuality, or to cause their human personality to fall into abeyance; nor are subconscious workings of personality more distinctively divine in quality than what goes on in consciousness. The idea, however, of the Spirit in Biblical and subsequent Christian thought has undergone a development, both as applied to man and as applied to God, in which the original animistic associations drop away, or survive only in the form of conscious metaphor. The idea of the "spirit" of man comes to mean man as regarded from the point of view of those capacities of human nature which are highest, and in virtue of which he is capable of life in God. The idea of the "Spirit" of God comes to mean God in so far as He is active Energy at work in the world and in man. And this points the way to a worthier conception of "inspiration," a conception which correlates it, not narrowly

with prophecy, or primarily with ecstasy and trance, but in wider fashion with the spiritual life of man in general. So interpreted, the idea of inspiration stands not for anything like possession, or the supersession of human personality by the invasive control of the Divine, but rather for the recognition of the Divine initiative and the Divine co-operation in every activity of human personality to good ends. It belongs to the religious view of the world, or certainly to the Christian view of the world, so to trace everything in human achievement which is excellent and good of its kind to the co-operation with the human agent of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. Thus, for example, every Christian, according to the New Testament view of the matter, is in his measure and degree an inspired person. "To every one of us is given grace," writes St. Paul, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." If the Spirit bestowed upon some Christians in New Testament times gifts and capacities which appeared extraordinary and miraculous—gifts of insight and prophecy, healing powers, speaking with tongues—nevertheless no less extraordinary, no less miraculous, were the gifts bestowed upon every Christian as such, in proportion to the sincerity and reality of his faith, viz., the fruits of Christian character and the capacity to love his neighbour as himself. Love is the highest gift of all, and "love," as St. John, too, expressed it, "is of God."

Nor is this wider and worthier conception of inspiration peculiar to Christianity. Something like

it is found also in the Old Testament, in those parts of it which are less primitive in origin. Thus the priestly writer in the Pentateuch says of Bezalel, who in Hebrew story was the builder of the Tabernacle, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass."¹ Here plainly the Holy Spirit is regarded as being the source of the craftsman's skill; and similarly Isaiah, drawing attention to the insight and skill of the husbandman in dealing with his crops, explains the phenomenon by saying, "For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him. . . . This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom."² So also the Divine origin of all "wisdom" forms a conspicuous theme of the entire "Wisdom Literature" of the Old Testament, both canonical and apocryphal. And this wider conception of inspiration is important, because it makes it plain both that inspiration must be conceived of as admitting of degrees, and also that the type of inspiration which we are to see in the prophet's vision or the psalmist's hymn of praise is not an isolated thing, but stands in relation to what is by no means confined to Bible personages or to Bible times, viz., the activity of the Spirit of God at all times as an Agency co-operating with human activity to good ends. We do, in fact, speak of the inspiration, for example, of Shakespeare, and I believe that we are right to do so: and

¹ Exod. xxxi. 3.

² Isa. xxviii. 26, 29.

we should agree in saying, I imagine, that Shakespeare was more inspired as a poet than Mr. Robert Montgomery, the author of *The Omnipresence of the Deity : a Poem*, about whom Macaulay wrote the famous Essay ; and we should be right. Inspiration, in fact, is like sanctity : all Christians are "called to be saints," but as a matter of fact they manifest sanctity in very varying degrees ; it is impossible to draw a hard-and-fast line between those who are "saints" and those who are not, and the line which the Church draws, for example, between canonized saints and those who are not canonized is only a rough-and-ready one ; but all sanctity, whatever its degree and wherever it appears, is a product of the working of the grace of God. So also with regard to inspiration : we commonly use the term with reference to the achievements of genius, artistic capacity, or spiritual insight, rather than with reference to the achievements of saintly character ; but "this also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts" ; and here, too, we can draw no hard-and-fast lines ; it is a question of degree, and in *some* measure and degree all men are, or ought to be, "inspired."

Let me apply what I have been saying to the question which probably most of us have in our minds, that of the inspiration of the Bible. Here, too, we shall be prepared to endorse the statement of a New Testament writer that holy men of old time "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ But we shall recognize that their inspiration admitted of

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

degrees, and that it did not in any case involve the supersession of their human personality, so as to turn them into mere mouthpieces of the Divine Voice, or, as writers, into mere living pens. The doctrine of the inspiration of the Biblical writers, which ought to be the verdict of experience in view of the spiritual man's appreciation of the value of what they wrote, is misused when it is interpreted either as foreclosing the issues, or as prescribing the conclusions, of literary and historical criticism. Inspiration is a matter of degree, and is concerned, in this particular context, with questions of insight into matters of spiritual truth, combined with literary and artistic genius : it does not involve the miraculous communication of knowledge. Moreover, a hard-and-fast line ought not to be drawn in principle between inspiration sacred and profane, or between inspiration in Bible times and now.

At the same time, if we accept anything like the Christian conception of God's progressive revelation of Himself through history, we shall plainly recognize the Bible as being for all time the religious classic of humanity, precisely because it is the literary deposit of the historical process by which God revealed Himself, by gradual stages, in the religious history and experience of the Hebrew people and of the first generation of Christians, who were witnesses of His culminating self-disclosure in the Person of Our Lord and in the bestowal of the Spirit who is at once the Spirit of Christ and of God. It is not merely that, as compared with other collections of sacred books or "scriptures," which form the fundamental authoritative literatures of other great

world-religions—those of Buddhism, for example, or, in the case of Mohammedanism, the Koran—the Bible, as judged by any sane standard of comparative valuation, stands head and shoulders above all conceivable rivals on the ground of the sheer spiritual distinction of its contents. It is also that, if we accept the doctrine of an historically-conditioned process of Divine self-disclosure, in which a particular people played a unique rôle as mediators to mankind of the fuller knowledge of the true God, self-revealed in the process of their national experience and history, then the religious literature of the people in question, in so far, at least, as it is the first-hand reflection of the revelational process, must occupy of necessity a unique position among the religious literatures of the world.

I would go further than this, and I would point to a spiritual value which, from another point of view, the Bible has been found in experience to possess: I mean its value as a vehicle of spiritual meditation. What may be described as the strictly devotional study of the Bible has been in the past, and may be in the present, a notable “means of grace.” It is a matter of verified experience that the writings of the Biblical authors exhibit, in varying but astonishing degree, the capacity to suggest spiritual applications and to form a fruitful basis of meditative devotion. It is a check upon mere arbitrary fancifulness and a preventive of artificiality if the practice of meditation is to a certain extent informed by critical knowledge; on the other hand, those who, like myself, are professionally

immersed in questions of textual, literary or historical criticism are rendered sometimes almost incapable of seeing the wood for the trees, and truths of the spirit are not infrequently revealed to babes, which may be hidden from the wise and prudent, in spite of their more accurate understanding and exegesis of the letter. The Bible has an astonishing spiritual suggestiveness, and the simplest and most simple-minded readers, in proportion to their spiritual insight, are in experience found able to feed and to nurture their souls upon its pages. I do not for a moment believe that this either is, or need be, destroyed by criticism. The Bible may quite well be regarded and treated somewhat differently for different purposes, and I think there is a certain truth in the distinction drawn in ancient times between the spiritual sense of the Scriptures on the one hand, and their literal or historical sense upon the other. Let me take an example from the recorded utterances of Christ—the famous argument from Psalm cx about David's son and David's Lord. Our Lord may have assumed, and probably He did assume, that the Psalm in question was written by David. The Psalms as a whole had come to be ascribed to David by the time of our Saviour's life on earth ; and it was no part of the meaning of the Incarnation that He should anticipate miraculously the conclusions of modern literary criticism, any more than that He should anticipate the conclusions of modern scientific knowledge in any other region of research. But now suppose that, for the sake of argument, we assume that the Psalm in question

was *not* in fact written by David, but is an honorific ode addressed to some Jewish ruler (Simon Macca-bæus or one of the later Maccabæan priest-kings), who is quite naturally apostrophized as " my lord " by one of his subjects ; the *historical* basis of our Lord's argument in that case falls to the ground. If the argument still stands, it must be made to depend on the legitimacy of seeing in an Old Testament passage, and even in what may be called the accidents of its wording, a deeper significance than is implied in its *prima facie* historical meaning, a significance based upon a spiritual application of the passage, of a kind which was not, and could not have been, present to the mind of its actual author when he wrote it. But this is, in point of fact, directly in line with our Lord's use of the Old Testament in general, as well as with the use which has traditionally been made for spiritual purposes of the sacred writings, both of the Old Testament and of the New, by the Christian Church. For my own part I believe such a use of the Bible to be, in a broad sense, both legitimate and important, and warranted by the experience of the Church ; and if it is argued that, in saying this, I am virtually giving back with one hand what I have taken away with the other, I would reply that that is exactly what I wish to do. Nothing that was true in the older, pre-critical view of Biblical inspiration can be destroyed by criticism, but only what was in fact mistaken. And the spiritual value of the Bible has been the result of what the Bible is, and not of what it has been wrongly supposed to be.

Speaking broadly, then, I would say that whatever is inspiring is inspired, and that all products of genius in whatever sphere are of God, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift. On the other hand, the discussion of what is commonly called the psychology of revelation does not seem to me to be of primary importance. The products of genius are not necessarily either more or less inspired for being given to the world as the result of psychological processes other than those which involve conscious reasoning ; though, of course, what is unreasoned is not necessarily irrational, and prophetic or artistic intuition may be the vehicle of truth. As a matter of fact, a message which, in the consciousness of him who delivers it, presents itself with apparent " givenness," as being rather a " word put into his mouth " than a conclusion attained by deliberate and conscious reasoning, is often proclaimed, for that very reason, with special conviction and impressiveness. But this is a characteristic which is shared in common by true and genuine prophets and by fanatics ; it is no criterion of inspiration, for the testing of which there is needed the discriminative judgment either of the spiritual man or of the spiritual society. The Church, as a matter of history, displayed what has been called the " inspiration of selection " in the choice of the particular books which went to form her sacred canon. Not all are by any means inspired in the same degree, but all are relevant to the purpose for which they were in fact selected, which was to furnish the authoritative literature of that revelation of God which came by Jesus Christ. I cannot

agree with Harnack in wishing to exclude from the Christian canon of sacred Scripture the books of the Old Testament, or to degrade them to the level of the Apocrypha¹; rather would I regard certain of the deutero-canonical books (which are often undeservedly neglected) as being in their way of equal value and importance with the canonical, as throwing light upon that later Judaism out of which Christianity arose. The books of the Bible contain a revelation of spiritual truth, not only "by divers portions and in divers manners," but also in varying degree. The Bible, taken as a whole, deservedly holds a unique place among the products of inspired genius in the particular sphere of religious literature; and that both in virtue of its intrinsic merits as a spiritual classic, and also because it happens to be the classic of that particular process of religious development which formed the channel of God's supreme and satisfying revelation of Himself to man.

¹ Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, pp. 248 seq.

CHAPTER V

ATONEMENT

It was taught in Judaism, and it is taught equally in Christianity, that the attitude of God towards sin is one of essential and utter antagonism. If recently, in exaggerated reaction from crude theories of the Atonement which involved, or were thought to involve, what may fairly be called "the theology of the whipping-boy," it has become fashionable to think of God as being simply complaisant in this regard—" *le bon Dieu me pardonnera : c'est son métier !*" —that has never been the attitude of the Christianity of history, and it is a shallow attitude. Sin is a tragic business, and the instinct of all peoples has connected it with tragedy and suffering. It is not only true that any forgiveness which is to be anything but an immoral complaisance must vindicate righteousness ; a way must be found of so transforming the inherent consequences of sin that the sinner may be reconciled with his own past. "I have sinned—let me suffer !" is the first instinctive cry of a sinner who "comes to himself," assuming that he has any decency left in him. The prodigal son in the parable desires in the first instance to bear the consequences of his sin. He desires, indeed, to

make acknowledgment—"Father, I have sinned before Heaven, and in thy sight"; but he desires also to bear the penalty, "Make me as one of thy hired servants! I have no more right to be called thy son." That "the doer should suffer" was one of the leading ideas of the highest Greek tragedy; and the Indian idea of Karma in a certain sense embodies the same conception. Sin entails consequences which can only be overcome by being borne; they cannot be simply evaded. And the first impulse of a repentant or quasi-repentant sinner is, as I have said, to pay the price:

I paid the price of all I done,
An' never grudged the price I paid,
But sat in clink without my boots,
Admirin' 'ow the world was made.

So Kipling represents the attitude of the British soldier towards his offences against the military code—a proud desire to pay the price. In such a mood suffering, provided it is recognized as being the just penalty of personal wrongdoing, is not resented, but in a certain sense almost welcomed. It affords, or appears to afford, a means of reparation, of wiping off the offence and restoring the offender to harmonious relations with an offended universe, in a fashion consistent with the retention of self-respect.

The first impulse, I think, of all peoples everywhere, so soon as they have attained to a grasp of the first principles of right and wrong and of the inherent majesty of the moral law, is thus to equate suffering with punishment, and to regard the punishment of sin as just. And in fact this idea of the equation of

sin with suffering appears so obvious and so inevitable a corollary of justice that it is assumed that it must everywhere operate ; the sinner must be a sufferer, and conversely, the sufferer must be a sinner. The hero in Browning's poem, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*, catches sight, on his way to the Tower, of a blind old horse, " thrust out past service from the devil's stud," standing stiff, raw and starved against a background of hideous and ignoble landscape ; the description of the brute's wretchedness culminates in the line

He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

So Job's friends in the Bible conclude from the fact of his sufferings to the necessity of his sin, and in the poem of Deutero-Isaiah the bystanders who witness the spectacle of the sufferings of the Servant of Yahweh are made to say :

We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and
afflicted,
We hid as it were our faces from him,
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The difficulty is that sin has a social reference, and entails consequences not only for the sinner, but for others. In this sense it is literally true that in some cases the consequences of the fathers' sins may be visited upon the children ; that in all wrong done, as between man and man, the innocent suffer with the guilty ; and frequently their sufferings are greater both in amount and in degree, as they are certainly more tragic in quality. Sin entails consequences not only for the person sinning, but also for the person sinned against ; and there is about all

sin, once committed, as there is about every deed, once done, a certain intrinsic irrevocability :

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on ; nor all thy Piety nor Wit

Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

No amount of mere bearing of the penalty on the sinner's part can either undo the past or repair the injury to the person he has wronged. Reconciliation, if there is to be a reconciliation, can never be brought about simply as the result of an endurance of penalty on the part of the sinner ; it can be brought about only on the basis of free forgiveness on the part of the person injured ; and this again is only possible if the person injured voluntarily accepts, and is willing to bear for love's sake, such consequences of the sinner's sin as do in fact light upon *him*. As the corollary of this, the person forgiven must be content *not* to bear such part of the consequences of his sin as have lighted upon the person whom he has injured : to abandon the proud attitude involved in the claim to " pay " in his own person the full " price " of his sin ; to be willing to accept forgiveness, not as a restoration which he has earned and to which he has therefore a moral right, but as an unmerited boon which he has *not* earned and can never deserve, and which the person forgiving can bestow only at personal cost.

Now, so long as sin in its wider aspect, that is, in relation to the universe at large, and not merely in relation to particular human individuals who may have been wronged by it, is thought of only as an

offence against a sort of impersonal Law of Righteousness, so long there can be no question of forgiveness or of atonement, but only of what we may agree to call, in Indian phrase, the Law of Karma. And there is this much truth in the idea of Karma, that not even forgiveness or atonement can in any way undo or obliterate the tragic consequences of sin, either for man or for God. Consequences can only be overcome by being endured. But, of course, the question of the attitude of God towards sin, and the question of Divine forgiveness, its possibility and its conditions, comes immediately into consideration so soon as sin is regarded not merely as an offence against impersonal Law, but as an offence against a righteous and holy God to whom man owes his being, to whom he is responsible, and towards whom he stands in a relationship of potential intimacy and personal converse. The operation, therefore, of Karma is not the whole of the story either in Christianity or in Judaism.

For it is sometimes almost forgotten that there is a real gospel of Divine grace, and of the Divine readiness to forgive sins, in the Old Testament. "God," as the woman of Tekoa pleads to King David, "doth not take away life, but deviseth means, that he that is banished be not an outcast from Him."¹ The system of sacrifices was of course regarded, in certain of its aspects, as making atonement for the sins of the people, though it is important to remember that the sin-offering was only regarded as covering unintentional or unwitting

¹ 2 Sam. xiv. 13.

offences, and cleansing from ceremonial defilement. The real gospel of Divine forgiveness in the Old Testament is contained rather in such passages as Exod. xxxiv. 6-7, "And Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"; or again in Psalm ciii. 8-9, 13:

Yahweh is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy ;
He will not always chide,
Neither will He keep His anger for ever.

* * * * *

Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him.

Mr. Claude Montefiore protests with justice against the ignoring of this aspect of the message of the Old Testament on the part of some Christian scholars, and points out that "the conception of God as forgiving from free grace was a fundamental and familiar feature of the Pharisaic religion, just as it still remains so."¹ The Rabbis, in short, would have agreed with the Dean of Carlisle in saying that "God is a loving Father, who will pardon sin upon the sole condition of true repentance."² What Judaism fails to bring out, and Christianity emphasizes, is the element of cost and of tragedy which forgiveness involves.

For though what I have called the Law of Karma is in forgiveness transcended, it is not simply abolished. The consequences of sin remain tragical to the end,

¹ Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, I, p. 79.

² Rashdall, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 48.

and they can be overcome and spiritually transmuted only by being accepted and freely endured. I have already emphasized the point that the forgiveness of an injury is inherently impossible except on the basis of a voluntary acceptance of the consequences entailed by the injury to the person forgiving. But this, in the Christian conception, is part of the meaning of Christ's Cross. It is the expression, in terms of the historical suffering at human hands of One who is the manifestation in manhood of what God is, of the inherent costliness of the Divine forgiveness of human sin ; with the result that what in Judaism, taken by itself, might be interpreted as a forgiveness lightly bestowed because costing little, is in Christianity a tragic forgiveness, only made possible by a love which, electing to suffer, through suffering attains triumph. And that is the only possible basis of a forgiveness which is inherently moral, and not merely complaisant.

I believe that we have here a real light thrown upon what may reasonably be meant by the " necessity " of the death of Christ. The Christian Gospel of atonement does not stand in opposition to the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in Judaism. Here, as elsewhere, Christianity does not destroy, but fulfils and completes, what in Judaism was true. That " God is a loving Father, who will pardon sin upon the sole condition of true repentance," was true in Judaism and is true equally in Christianity. The Gospel of Judaism was none the less essentially incomplete. The Old Testament, taken as a whole, is the proclamation on the one hand of God's mercy

and forgiveness and purpose of redemption for His people, on the other of His righteousness and severity and condemnation of human sin. The two conceptions are juxtaposed, but they are hardly related in any intelligible way to one another. What was needed, in order that free course might be given to the astonishing Gospel of Divine forgiveness, was a clearing up of the situation. It had to be made plain both that the Divine love is of so amazing a character that there is no sin so black that it cannot be forgiven, and yet at the same time that evil is so inherently evil that God Himself can overcome it only at the cost of spiritual agony and sacrifice, that human sin involves consequences for God, as well as for man, which can only be transmuted by being accepted and freely endured, and that the spiritual victory of Divine Love, achieved in the act of free and royal forgiveness, is a victory won through suffering. In order that this should be done, it was "necessary" that the Christ should die; and that is the value, or part of the value, of the Cross.

The Cross has undoubtedly had such a value in Christian experience; it can have such a value in thought, on the sole condition that we are prepared to see in it the supreme expression of God's love, and of the eternal attitude of God towards sin and sinners. Apart, of course, from such an interpretation in terms of classical Christian doctrine, the crucifixion of Jesus is merely an appealing historical example of the martyrdom of a good man in a cause which he rightly or wrongly believed to be the cause of God. There have been other martyrs to duty

before and since, and no one would undervalue either the inspiration of their examples or the impressiveness of the spiritual witness which they have borne. But their martyrdom does not amount to a Gospel of God's forgiveness of human sin: and neither does that of Christ, unless Christ be in some sense God. On the Christian interpretation, the life of Christ, culminating in His death and transfigured by His resurrection, is a supreme Divine Act for the redemption of man; and in it there is expressed once and for all in decisive and satisfying fashion God's attitude to human sin. There is no minimizing of the horror or the tragedy of it—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." "And His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Nevertheless, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Christ's spiritual attitude towards His Passion and towards those who caused it is, on the Christian hypothesis, a mirror of the eternal attitude of God towards sin and sinners. It had always been God's attitude, because God's attitude does not change: in this sense the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; but it was involved in that Divine Love, which Christ pictured under the figure of a Shepherd going after lost sheep, that what had always been God's attitude towards sin and sinners, should find actual expression, once and for all, in space and time, through a life actually lived and a death actually died by the Son of God.

Christ died, as a matter of history, for love of men, and in obedience to what He believed was the will

of God. He seems to have regarded His own death, in so far as He saw a meaning in it, not primarily as we have been viewing it—that is, as an expression of the Divine love and of the spiritual victory through suffering of the Divine will-to-forgive—but as in some sense a spiritual necessity for the redemption of God's people. Only through suffering could come salvation, and the Son of Man came, therefore, “to give His life a ransom for many.”¹ The words are in all probability an echo of Isaiah liii. 11-12, and it seems likely, therefore, that the application of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah in a Christian sense goes back to our Lord Himself. It is this prophecy, and the various quotations of it in the New Testament, or to speak more exactly, the applications which have been made of it by later systematizers who treated prophetic poetry as prose, which have given rise to most of the difficulties in people's minds with regard to the Atonement. Notoriously it has been made the basis of that kind of theologizing about the Atonement which interprets it as a vicarious punishment of the innocent for the guilty, or as what the Dean of Carlisle describes as an “expiatory sacrifice.” I do not think it is strictly necessary either to read these conceptions into it or to base upon it any very rigid theory. I venture to think that to the mind of our Lord it need not have suggested more than the general idea of suffering as the vocation of the

¹ Mark x. 45 ; Matt. xx. 28. I would remark that I see no solid grounds for doubting the authenticity of this saying, and that I think it is presupposed by a good deal in the Gospel story that our Lord's mind was deeply influenced by Deutero-Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant of God.

Servant of the Lord, and of His own vocation as Messiah to be God's Servant. He was to give His life for others in obedience to the will of God, and God would somehow make fruitful for others His act of sacrifice. I think that the passage undoubtedly carries with it the idea of vicarious suffering, but not necessarily that of vicarious punishment in the rigid sense of "the theology of the whipping-boy." The Hebrew mind did not easily distinguish between suffering and punishment. Need the phrases which, in the passage as it stands, do undoubtedly suggest vicarious punishment, be more than a strong pictorial way of expressing in Hebrew idiom the idea that the Servant's sufferings were undeserved, that it was the fault of others that He suffered, and not His own, but that it was God's will that He should patiently submit to shameful treatment, and that His patient martyrdom would not be vain? So interpreted I cannot see anything in the passage or in its application to our Lord which is either immoral or untrue. It was, in fact, at least contingently God's will that Jesus should die for the sake of others and as the result of others' sin; and His patient suffering *has*, in actual fact, been made fruitful for the spiritual redemption of mankind.

It was, I think, this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in combination perhaps with the twenty-second Psalm, which to the earliest Christian Church presented itself as first throwing any clear light upon such a tragedy as the death of God's Messiah, which had otherwise appeared a spiritual enigma. St. Paul thinks out the whole subject more elaborately and

from various points of view ; and some of his ways of looking at it are apt to sound to many people to-day almost repellent. As a matter of fact I do not believe that he ever really teaches a merely vicarious view of the Atonement or that he ever strictly regards Christ's sufferings as a " penalty " endured by Jesus in our stead. What in his eyes gave such surpassing and peculiar moral value to the death of Christ is not truly expressed by saying that it was a case of X dying instead of Y ; it was a case of the Son of God surrendering Himself to die for the sake of men, and therefore what gave it its value was the fact that it was so supreme and astonishing an exhibition of the love of God. Or again it was a kind of representative and inclusive death of mankind in Christ, that in Him they might rise to newness of spiritual life and power. This latter may be to our thinking a difficult conception ; but it is plainly not immoral.

There is a touch of strong rhetoric about some of St. Paul's phrases, as when he writes that Christ " redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us,"¹ or again that " Him Who knew no sin [God] made to be sin on our behalf."² But the point of these sentences is really, I think, only to reaffirm forcibly the startling paradox of the death of the Messiah : it was historically the case that the Son of God, who knew no sin, had in fact been executed as a malefactor, and by a form of death which the Jewish law regarded as involving a " curse."³ St. Paul's main emphasis all through

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

² 2 Cor. v. 21.

³ Deut. xxi. 23.

is on the love of God as expressed in the death of Christ. God does not require to be reconciled to man, and the Anglican Article which affirms that Christ "suffered . . . to reconcile His Father to us" is utterly unscriptural and un-Pauline. What St. Paul writes is rather that "all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."¹

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the further point is made that reconciliation means fellowship, and that in reconciling them to God Christ reconciles men incidentally to one another, throwing down, in particular, the "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile, and destroying the ancient "enmity," to the end that all men might come to know the fellowship of the "mystery" involved in their being knit up ultimately into spiritual unity in Him²—a very important implication of Christian redemption upon its social side, and one which has a peculiar appeal to the hearts of men to-day, when the desire and the aspiration after fellowship, alike between man and man, between nation and nation, and between class and class, is everywhere manifest. The Gospel proclaims unity in Christ as the sole basis of any effectual reconciliation between the jarring

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18-20.

² Cf. Ephesians ii. 14, 15, iii. 9, iv. 13-16.

or hostile "interests" which in the existing state of affairs divide and paralyse mankind. Atonement between man and man is only possible upon the basis of atonement between man and God.

It is not necessary to press strictly or to defend *au pied de la lettre* every particular phrase or metaphor by which the various New Testament writers attempt to elucidate the significance of the Atonement. There is one further line of thought in particular, however, about which I think something ought to be said, for the reason that it is so constantly apt to be misunderstood—I mean the application to the Atonement and to the death of Christ of the ideas and terminology of sacrifice. "If thou shouldest make His life an offering for sin"¹—"Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"² For "ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb

¹ Isa. liii. 10.

² Heb. ix. 11-14.

without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ."¹

Now, the root ideas in such passages as these are simply two, viz. : (1) that just as in animal sacrifice the death of the animal was involved, so, as a matter of actual fact, it had been involved in the great deed which Christ did to bring men back to God that He should literally die ; and (2) that just as in the ritual of animal sacrifice the central idea was that of the dedication to God of an unblemished and spotless life, with which that of the offerer (which ought to have been spotless and unblemished, but actually was not) was regarded somehow as being identified, so in the great Christian drama of Atonement Christ's life of flawless obedience, perfected in death, was the means by which man was made one with God, and God with man.

The important thing to be clear about is that the ancient theory of sacrifice did *not* involve the idea of a *pœna vicaria*, but that of the dedication of life in mystic purity to God—"for the life of the flesh is in the blood : and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls : for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life."² That the animal offered in sacrifice was not regarded as being in any sense a "sin-bearer"³ is made certain by the fact that, so far from being considered polluted or unclean, it was held to be so inherently "holy" as to communicate a kind of contagion of "holiness" to the offerer. And that

¹ 1 Pet. i. 18-19.

² Lev. xvii. 11.

³ The goat of Lev. xvi. 21 is not offered in sacrifice, but driven away.

which in Old Testament ritual was mere "sacrifice" became, in the case of our Lord, *self*-"sacrifice." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses this by describing the Lord Jesus as being High Priest and Sacrifice in one; the sacrifice which He offers is the sacrifice of Himself; that is to say, it is the pure offering of a life which, from first to last, was completely dedicated in willing service to God and man, and which found its completion in the willing surrender of life itself in the cause of both.

And this side or aspect of Christ's atonement, viz., the sacrificial side, is, in its turn, important. We may or may not be in love with the particular metaphors, derived from Old Testament ritual and from the practice of animal sacrifice, in which in the New Testament it is expressed. What it essentially means is, that just as we have seen in the suffering of Christ an expression of the tragic consequences of human sin as affecting God, and of the inherent costliness of the Divine forgiveness, so we are to see also, in the same suffering of Christ, an acceptance of the tragic consequences of human sin as affecting man (for it is sin's worst tragedy that it brings suffering upon the innocent): and in the perfectness of Christ's love towards those who thus made Him suffer, and the perfect obedience and dedication of His will to the will of God, we are to see the ideal expression of what man's attitude should be, but is not, and yet in Christ may be enabled to become.

In this sense it is true that Christ is to all eternity the great High Priest and Victim of mankind. It is

in Him, and not apart from Him—that is, in His Spirit and in virtue of what He is, and not in virtue of what we are in ourselves as apart from Him—that we have “boldness to enter into the holy place,” and as Christians dare to claim “the right to be called the sons of God,” and in free and filial intimacy to approach our Father. And it is only, surely, as men truly come to be “in Him,” and, being baptized into His Body and made to drink of His Spirit, in such wise become partakers at once of His sufferings and of His triumph, as in some measure to share His spiritual attitude both towards God and towards their fellows, it is only so that there is hope of the world’s redemption.

For it is utterly a mistake, in considering Atonement, to separate between that which was once and for all achieved in principle in the historical life and death of Jesus Christ, and the continuous process by which the fruits of that which was there accomplished are made actual in the lives of individual men and in the achievements of the Spirit in the Church. Initial forgiveness is not the whole, nor is individual salvation more than a limited part, of what Atonement means. “A Gospel of the Atonement,” it has been said, “is singularly parochial which covers only the relations of the individual with God,”¹ and so too, “the response of the Gospel to the human sense of actual sin and unattainable holiness is not the half-grace of forgiveness but the whole-grace of redemption and deliverance.”² An initial forgiveness

¹ Dinsmore, *The Atonement in Literature and Life*, p. 219.

² Du Bose, *The Gospel according to St. Paul*, p. 102.

would be abortive indeed which did not issue in genuine newness of spiritual life and power, and the Christian who in any true and genuine sense is "crucified with Christ" will know himself called not to spiritual peace but to spiritual war: for he is called to be a follower of Christ crucified in the great spiritual adventure of victoriously redeeming love; pledged in Him to a partnership of sacrificial life, and to a share in the world's burden of spiritual tragedy; called, in a word, to be partaker in the supreme Divine world-purpose of redemption and of atonement, filling up on his part "that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ" in his flesh "for His Body's sake, which is the Church."¹

¹ Coloss. i. 24.

CHAPTER VI

NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM

A HUNDRED years ago the people of this country, though not in any true sense of the word more religious than they are to-day, were still, for the most part, in the condition of mind which in the language of our late enemies is described by the epithet *bibelfest*: that is to say, they held fast to the letter of the Bible, and regarded the Book, not only as a whole but also in all its parts, as the immediate "word of God," and as a vehicle of plenary inspiration. Whatever was stated in the Bible was accepted at once as authoritative, and regarded as being invested with the attribute of miraculous inerrancy.

Historical criticism has notoriously changed all this. The *Lux Mundi* school, a generation ago, popularized among orthodox English Churchmen a moderately drastic critical reconstruction of the Old Testament story of Israel. Since then it has been perceived that the process cannot stop short with the Old Testament (to the inspiration of which the Church is at least as deeply committed as to that of the New), but that analogous methods can and must be applied also in the interpretation, as historical documents, of the Gospels and Acts, the Epistles and the Apocalypse. It must in justice be added that the members

of the *Lux Mundi* school themselves perceived this. They were as far as possible from drawing any distinction in principle between the criticism of the Old Testament and that of the New. Nevertheless, in the *application* of their principles to the criticism of the New Testament they showed themselves more cautious and conservative than their successors have found it altogether possible to be.

A generation, in fact, has passed ; and to-day the assumption, as a matter of method, of the legitimacy and the necessity, in dealing with the literature of both the Testaments, of complete freedom of historical criticism and of unshackled interpretation is a fundamental postulate of contemporary theology in every university in Europe and America.

Of the *results* of such modern methods of critical study it is still true that to the general public comparatively little is known. They are, indeed, published in innumerable books, and attempts have been made to popularize them, sometimes not over wisely. But the general public has left the books to the specialists. The plain man knows only that the Bible *is* being critically studied ; and he suspects, in many cases, that it is being “ undermined.” So (to his own great loss) he does not read it, as his fathers did ; or, if he does, it is with the uncomfortable feeling that the ground is slipping from beneath his feet. He is no longer *bibelfest*.

Now, this is a state of things which need not and ought not to continue, since it can be modified materially by quite a limited amount of knowledge and a modicum of common sense. There is, in fact,

no other historical subject-matter, except that of the origins of the Christian religion, in dealing with which the historical student is liable to be confronted by the plain man with the crude alternatives of either regarding every traditional statement as infallible, or else despairing wholly of the possibility of knowledge: no other literature save that of the Bible with regard to which anyone will maintain that its spiritual and moral value, or even that its value for the purposes of history, is dependent upon the assumption of its miraculous inerrancy. Yet with regard to the Biblical literature large numbers of people are still in this very elementary condition of mind. "All or nothing," they cry; "infallibility or agnosticism. There is no logical halting-place between the two." "And so" (to quote a New Testament writer) "we came towards Rome."

It has been said of the Roman Catholic Church that she manifests every Christian grace with the single exception of veracity. As a matter of fact, it would be unfair not to acknowledge that even from an intellectual point of view the Roman position is deserving of all respect. But I cannot personally share it. I believe that infallibility is not to be had, and ought not to be demanded. Moreover, with regard to the interpretation of the Bible, a certain carefully safe-guarded liberalism is not unknown even within the rigidly disciplined system of Rome herself. Certainly for those who are not Roman Catholics the time has come when it ought to be possible to sum up, in broad outline, the general upshot of New Testament criticism, and to offer a

few remarks on the whole subject of a generally constructive kind.

It is well to begin by recognizing that there are losses as well as gains. Fundamentally, the losses in question can be summed up in a single proposition, viz. :—*It is no longer possible to be assured, with complete historical certainty, that any of the recorded incidents in the life of our Lord or in those of His apostles actually occurred precisely as it is described in the New Testament, or that any of the sayings ascribed to Him are really His utterances, simply upon the bare ground of their occurrence in the Bible.* Formerly it was believed that the inspiration of the Biblical writers guaranteed such an assurance; now it is perceived that it does not. Documents—even the documents of the New Testament—cannot necessarily be accepted for historical purposes at their face value. Considered simply as evidence, they must be judged and tested by the same methods and standards as other human testimony, and must be taken for what they are, not for what they are not.

Now, this admission has the effect of introducing into our knowledge of the life of our Lord precisely the same type and kind of uncertainty as that which exists in our knowledge of the life of Julius Cæsar, and into our knowledge of the teaching of our Lord the same type and kind of uncertainty as exists in our knowledge of the teaching of Socrates. We know the teaching of Socrates only through the accounts of his disciples, in particular Xenophon and Plato; we know the life of Cæsar only through its

results in history and through the accounts given of it by more or less contemporary Roman writers—except, of course, that for parts of it (and here the parallel breaks down, since our Lord wrote nothing) we have the *Commentaries* and other writings of Cæsar himself.

And these historical parallels are, I think, instructive. That Cæsar is an historical personage, that Cæsar was murdered in the Forum, that the sources for the life of Cæsar, as historical sources go, are good, and that we have the materials for a generally secure historical portrait of “the Cæsar of history” as he actually lived—these are propositions which no one is likely to dispute. The truth of them is not really affected in the least by the equally undoubted facts that many details in the recorded story of Cæsar are doubtful, that all are beset by the uncertainties which attach in general to all human testimony, that with regard to many of the subordinate problems of Cæsar’s life there is room for divergence of opinion, so that scholarly critics are found differing in their estimate of the evidence; or again, that a clever and sceptical dialectician could as easily dissolve away the whole historical fabric of Cæsar’s life, and resolve the great Roman into one more of the many recurrent forms of sun-myth, or into a thinly disguised version of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, as the former feat has already been performed in the case of Napoleon by Archbishop Whately, and the latter by the “pan-Babylonian” writer Jensen in the case of the Gospels.

So also with regard to the tradition of our Lord’s

teaching. No one will assert that nothing is known of the teaching of Socrates, simply on the ground that we have only conflicting accounts of it by Xenophon and Plato. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* gives one picture, Plato's *Dialogues* another ; and just as it is commonly thought that the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon stands closer to the letter of what Socrates said, and yet that the Socrates of Plato's *Dialogues* is a more profound interpretation of the essential spirit of the great Athenian, so New Testament critics are accustomed to regard the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels as being closer to the letter of what Jesus said, while the Fourth Gospel gives a more profound and reflective interpretation of the essential spirit and meaning of Christianity.

There is this difference, however, that Plato, for all his veneration for Socrates, does not worship him; and though he makes Socrates the chief interlocutor in his dialogues, the thought—there is reason to suppose—is largely the thought of Plato, and the disciple is in this case greater than his master. In the case of the greater Parallel few will be disposed to dispute the saying of Matthew Arnold: "Jesus is above His reporters" ; in *this* case "the disciple is not greater than his Lord." The disciple, moreover, does in this latter case most emphatically worship his Lord as divine. He writes his Gospel very largely in order to contend, in implicit controversy with the Synagogue, that there is no blasphemy involved in giving to Jesus the same "honour" as is given to God. Christ and the Father, he maintains, though distinguishable and distinct, are also "one."

“ He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him.” What is at stake here is not a critical question at all, but a spiritual question. It does not matter whether the Fourth Evangelist's picture of our Lord is a literally true account of what Jesus said and did. What matters is whether it presents a spiritually true valuation of Jesus' person. Is the Christian Church, as against its Jewish opponents, right or wrong in giving to Jesus Christ the “ honour ” which is due to God? If it is right, then there follows as an inevitable corollary the broad truth of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, and the Christianity of history is justified. If it is wrong, then the Christianity of history, for which martyrs have died, and in the power of which saints have lived lives of spiritual beauty, is rooted only in a delusion which has persisted through the centuries, and which had its origin in the erroneous deification of a Jew. In the nature of the case the divinity of Christ can never be “ proved ” : it can only be witnessed to by those whose lives are built upon its power. The value of the Fourth Gospel as an historical document consists in this, that it reflects as in a mirror the Christianity of Asia Minor at the end of the first century A.D., that it shows us the Church of later apostolic days making its great affirmation over against the Synagogue from which it has now become wholly severed, and that it sets before us, in a work which for the sheer spiritual distinction and beauty of its contents is unparalleled, an interpretation of the life of Jesus to which successive generations of believers have set

their seal, upon the basis of a life's experience, that it is true.

I have written of the Fourth Gospel (which is probably, with the exception of 2 Peter, the latest writing in the New Testament), because what is true of it is true also, in a measure, of the New Testament writings as a whole. They are primarily documents of Christian faith, written by believers for believers, taking for granted a common conviction about Christ. The Epistles are for the most part actual letters—those of St. Paul, for example, are simply the occasional correspondence of a hard-worked missionary. The Gospels are short manuals designed primarily for the instruction and edification of the Church. The Acts has a similar purpose : it is designed to show the triumphant progress of the new religion from Jerusalem to Rome, as the result of the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. No doubt there is an apologetic element in the New Testament, but there is no apology for Christianity designed primarily for pagan readers, or intended to bring conviction to those outside. There were originally no non-Christian readers of the New Testament. And therefore the documents are primarily expressions of Christianity : only secondarily do they contain an account of its historical origins. But of course the Gospels, and more particularly the Synoptic Gospels, were written partly at least in order to gratify the natural desire of those who had been converted to the new faith to have an account of its origin, to know how the Good News began ; and from this point of view they represent accounts, which

were set down in writing at a fairly early date, and by men who were in fairly close touch with the original apostolic circle, of how it did all begin in the life of Jesus.

A century of critical inquiry has shed real light upon the Gospels and upon the New Testament as a whole. The same period has witnessed the rise and fall of a large number of untenable hypotheses. When English scholarship first began to take serious notice of the critical theories of contemporary Continental writers (the work of Bishop Lightfoot may be held to have marked an epoch), there was a widely prevalent tendency in Germany to date most of the New Testament books unduly late. Strauss had put forward in 1835 his famous mythological interpretation of the Gospels; Baur had published ten years later his equally famous study of St. Paul. Both of these writers were philosophical disciples of Hegel, and the influence of Hegel's dialectic, with its triadic scheme of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, was strongly marked in their interpretation of the New Testament. Baur was professor of theology at Tübingen. The Tübingen school, as it came to be called, starting from the four Pauline Epistles which alone Baur acknowledged to be genuine writings of the Apostle (those to the Romans and Galatians and the two Epistles to the Corinthians), were the first to propound and to elaborate a theory which came to play a great part in the subsequent history of criticism, and which in an attenuated form is hardly defunct even to-day.

It is the theory which makes St. Paul the virtual

creator of the Christianity of history as we know it, and which regards the controversy between St. Paul and the Judaisers, to which the four Epistles already named bear witness, as being only one element in a thorough-going cleavage between St. Paul's gospel and that of the original Twelve. For the one party Jesus (so it was alleged by Baur) was simply the Messiah of the Jews, the national Deliverer of Israel. This belief, shattered for a moment by the Master's death, revived afterwards when it came to be believed that He was risen, but still retained its national limitations. Jesus would come again, and resume His interrupted work. When that happened, David's kingdom would be established, and the supremacy of Israel would be assured. . . . For the other party, that of St. Paul, Jesus was a heavenly Being, supernatural in origin, the Son of God who took the form of a servant and died to expiate the sins of men. His death carried with it in principle the end of Judaism, the emancipation of religion from national limitations, the abolition of the Law, the new liberty of the Spirit. . . . The Master of the original Twelve was the Jesus of the Galilæan ministry, who had moved as a Jew among Jews. St. Paul, who cared not to know Christ after the flesh, served a different Master, viz., the glorified Spirit-Being who had appeared to him on the Damascus road. Except in name there was little identity between the two, and the difference between the two conceptions virtually amounted to a divergence of two religions. So we have Judaistic Christianity as thesis, universalistic or Pauline Christianity as antithesis, in the true

Hegelian manner. . . . The synthesis, in which the opposition came to be transcended, is according to Baur the ecclesiastical catholicism of history, at once a liberalized version of St. Peter and a legalized version of St. Paul, a *tertium quid* in which the points of view of both are in a certain sense harmonized and reconciled. The documents of the New Testament represent for the most part the literature of this reconciliation. They tell the story of Christian origins in such a way that the traces of the primitive quarrel are almost, though not quite, obliterated. The Gospels, as it were, "Paulinize" the story of Jesus: the Acts quite unhistorically depicts St. Peter and St. Paul as walking hand in hand as brothers. Consequently they must all be dated late—presumably somewhere in the second half of the second Christian century.

To attack Tübingenism now is like flogging a dead horse. It was shattered by an independent investigation of the New Testament documents, undertaken by critics less fettered by theoretical presuppositions, though its fascination was such that for a generation or more its ghost sat crowned upon its grave. Shreds and patches of it survive in some quarters still, but they are only shreds and patches. The theory failed to do justice to St. Paul's own words in that very Epistle to the Galatians to which its authors made their primary appeal. It can be admitted, and it is indeed important to recognize, that a development is traceable in early Christian views about Christ. The Church expressed its valuation of His Person in different forms for different people: a theology

really adequate to express and justify the believer's attitude towards his Lord took time to elaborate. There was probably from the first a certain difference between the terminology and point of view of the Gentile Christian and those of the Jewish Christian, though this can easily be exaggerated. But what St. Paul makes quite clear in the first two chapters of Galatians is this : (1) that he was sent to preach the Gospel by Jesus Christ and not by the Twelve : he is Christ's " apostle " and not theirs ; but (2) he has conferred with them and verified the fact that his preaching is in substance identical with theirs and approved by them, so that between Paulinism and the Christianity of Peter all cleavage is excluded. The one point of difference which for a time actually did threaten to split the Church was a subordinate question, that of the obligation or non-obligation for Gentile Christians of the Jewish Law. Even with regard to this St. Paul claims St. Peter as being in principle upon his side : the whole trouble was caused not by the leaders but by lesser men who claimed to be their followers—" certain which came from James," who were not necessarily the true exponents of James' mind, but whose fanaticism did harm until it was officially disclaimed. The Tübingen critics erected a mountain upon the basis of this mole-hill.

More fatal to the Tübingen theory even than the closer study of St. Paul was the closer study of the rest of the New Testament. The documents cannot be dated so late as the theory requires, a point which may be illustrated by reference first to the Synoptic

Gospels and secondly to the Acts. The history of Judaism in the first century A.D. is cleft in two by a great and crushing catastrophe—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. The whole régime of Palestinian Judaism as it had existed up to that time, the unimpeded life of Jewish piety centred in local synagogue and national Temple, the Temple itself with its apparatus of priesthood, ritual and sacrifices, the various parties—Pharisees, Sadducees, and the rest—all were by that catastrophe either swept out of existence or very radically transformed. Judaism after the débâcle was a new and a different thing, more akin to the Judaism of to-day. Priesthood and Temple had disappeared, the national life was crushed: the religion survived, but in the changed form of which the eventual monuments are the Mishna and the Talmuds. Now, what is obvious at a glance to any historical student of Judaism who, with these facts in mind, considers the Synoptic Gospels, is that their spirit and setting, their whole atmosphere and point of view, as regards the life and the institutions which they describe, are those of the Judaism of Palestine prior to A.D. 70. Even the Fourth Gospel, though its atmosphere is Hellenistic, reflects in numerous details so accurate a knowledge of Judaism in Palestine that it is almost impossible that it should have been written by anyone who had not been personally familiar with the life of Jerusalem before the crisis. But in the case of the Synoptic Gospels, this consideration applies with tenfold force. They are racy of the soil. They are emphatically documents of contemporary life. They

may have been written—though this is not certain—after the actual siege and fall of Jerusalem had taken place : at the latest, within a decade of A.D. 70—as a matter of fact, it is probable that St. Mark, at least, is earlier ; and Harnack and others date all three before the crisis. What is certain is that a date in the second century is quite impossible.

Then, in the second place, with regard to the Acts. It is obvious that the parts of this document in which the first person plural is used (the so-called “ we ” sections) purport to embody at first hand the actual reminiscences of one of St. Paul’s companions. The suggestion that this is merely a literary device becomes extremely improbable unless the book as a whole can be dated late : and against this is the accuracy of its archæology. The latter characteristic has been illustrated abundantly by the researches of Sir William Ramsay and other authorities. The writer knows, for example, the correct titles of the magistrates of relatively obscure provincial towns ; he is aware of the distinguishing characteristics of local heathen cults in different parts of Asia Minor ; he designates accurately, using the technical Greek equivalent *χώρα*, the various administrative subdivisions or *regiones* of different Roman provinces. His book is, in fact, of high value for the purposes of Roman history, as giving a first-hand picture of life under the Empire from the point of view of a provincial. It is difficult not to think that the writer had really, as his own implicit claim suggests, been over the actual ground of St. Paul’s travels in the company of St. Paul himself : difficult, too, to

think that the attitude displayed in the book towards the imperial administration, with its confidence in Roman justice, and its convincing picture of the puzzled reluctance of the Roman officials to interfere in what appeared to them to be an obscure quarrel between rival Jewish sects, would have been possible in a Christian work written *after* the age of Domitian certainly, if not of Nero, when the Empire had once and for all declared itself as hostile towards the Church.

And if the "we" sections are the work of a companion of St. Paul, there is a strong and cumulative argument, based on a minute and detailed examination of vocabulary and style throughout the two books, which points to the author of the "we" sections being identical with the author of the Acts of the Apostles as a whole, and therefore also with the author of the Third Gospel, to which the Acts plainly forms a sequel. Of the companions of St. Paul known to us from references in his Epistles, Luke, who is not mentioned by name in Acts, is upon this hypothesis available as writer, and thus the datum of tradition, which ascribes the composition of the Third Gospel and of the Acts to "Luke the beloved physician," appears in this instance to be confirmed. Some critics, comparing closely the vocabulary of St. Luke's Gospel and of the Acts with that of the Greek medical writers Galen and Hippocrates, believe that they can detect in both books traces of medical knowledge and a tendency to describe diseases and symptoms in what was then the correct technical terminology.

If these conclusions are correct, it follows obviously that in the second part of Acts we have for St. Paul's travels a first-hand source of the highest historical value. It does not follow that the historical value of the first half of the book, in which the writer was dependent upon sources of information, whether written or oral, which reached him at second or at third hand, is necessarily quite so high. Nevertheless the writer, if he is St. Luke, would have had opportunities of being in contact with the traditions of Palestinian Christianity (he accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem on the occasion which led to the Apostle's arrest), and his sources of information would be early and good. It is possible that an element of popular legend has crept here and there into the stories which St. Luke preserves; but his work does enable us to reconstruct critically an intelligible account of the beginnings and development of early Christianity, and there can be little reasonable doubt that it is what it pretends to be, viz., a *bona-fide* historical document of the first century, and the work of a man of insight as well as of literary skill.

It remains to give a brief account of the probable origin of the Gospels. It has been already implied that they were written, not for posterity, but to meet the needs of the contemporary Church. Behind the Gospels is a period of oral preaching, the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah. But this involved telling, at least in bare outline, the story of His public life, and in particular the story of the Passion (in which the Church very early came to see a positive

significance, viz., that the saving mystery of the Cross formed part of the Divine plan for man's redemption) and of the Resurrection which had turned it from a defeat into a victory. It is probable that the creed of Palestinian Christianity was at first simply the affirmation, "The Messiah is Jesus": which meant at least that in Him God had visited and redeemed His people, and would hereafter through Him judge the world and usher in His glorious Kingdom. It is probable that Gentile Christianity grew up *before* the mission preaching of St. Paul, and had its centre first in Antioch. Its creed was, "Jesus Christ is Lord," i.e., the divine Lord of the community of His worshipping disciples, the "Lord" at whose "table" the Brotherhood became partakers, as in contemporary pagan confraternities men became partakers (e.g.) of "the table of the *Lord* Serapis"—or, as St. Paul roundly puts it, of "the table of devils." There is reason to think that the earliest document or documents to be put into writing to supplement this earliest preaching of the "Good News about Jesus Christ" was a manual (or possibly several manuals) no longer extant, consisting mainly of remembered sayings of the Master. To this supposed document or documents it is customary to attach the name or symbol "Q,"¹ and it is believed that the compilers of our first and third Gospels were indebted to an edition or editions of "Q," from which they derived much of the matter consisting of sayings of Jesus which they have in common, but which is not found in Mark.

¹ The initial letter of the German word *Quelle* (= "source").

At a later but still early date was written, probably at Rome, the earliest of our existing Gospels, that of Mark. It was written in bad Greek by an Aramaic-speaking Jew—very likely, as tradition asserts, St. Mark—who seems to have presupposed “Q” (which there is reason to think he sometimes quotes or echoes from memory), and who wrote to supplement it. What in effect he does is to put into writing the substance of that earliest story of Jesus which from the first had formed the basis of mission preaching. But he wishes also to show that Jesus is the Son of God—as witness His mighty acts (in which the Evangelist probably saw an evidential value), the acknowledgments of the demons (the demonology of this Gospel is one of the marks of its attachment to the popular mind of Palestine), and the utterances of the heavenly Voice (that the Divine Voice was occasionally to be heard speaking upon earth was a Jewish rabbinical belief). The Gospel consists of a series of vivid little stories selected from the current traditions about Jesus. It is arranged, I think, partly as a manual of the Christian life, which for the disciple as for the Master had its beginning in Baptism and the gift of the Spirit, involved temptation and the forsaking of friends, and led sooner or later to the Cross and possible martyrdom, and to a spiritual triumph only to be gained through suffering.

The third stage in the making of the Gospel tradition was that of the compilation of the Gospels which we now know as those according to St. Matthew and St. Luke. St. Luke in all probability

was actually, as we have seen, the author of the Gospel which bears his name. The compiler of St. Matthew's Gospel is unknown. St. Matthew's name very possibly became attached to it because the tax-collector Levi, whose call to follow Jesus is narrated in St. Mark, is in this Gospel described as Matthew, and thus identified with one of the traditional twelve Apostles. The method of the composition of the first and third Gospels is broadly identical, though Luke wrote in the interests of the Gentile mission, while the first Evangelist compiled his work for the use possibly of the Church in Syria, and in a more Jewish-Christian atmosphere of thought. In each case Mark and "Q" are combined, the Marcan narrative being taken as a framework, and the discourse-material from "Q" fitted into it, either in what appeared to be appropriate contexts as in Luke, or more artificially in carefully arranged discourses recurring at intervals as in Matthew. Each of the two Gospels includes also additional material peculiar to itself, the precise sources of which cannot, of course, be traced.

The characteristics of the three Synoptic Gospels have been thus summed up :—" Mark proclaimed Jesus the conqueror of demons : Jesus the giver of a new religious life in which the Gentile might know the true God, apart from the fetters of Jewish law : Jesus the God who died and rose again in actual fact, to transform the moral character of men : Jesus the coming Judge and Lord of all. That is the good news of Jesus Christ. . . . Matthew . . . conceives Christianity as the fulfilment of Judaism. It is a

moral law at once higher and easier than that of Moses. The Divine Lawgiver who has thus fully revealed the word of God is the Jesus whom the Jews rejected and crucified. He cometh quickly to judgment. Prepare ye then to meet Him. . . . Luke is the gospel of mercy. If there is something of pessimism in Matthew, Luke is full of hope. If both present a seeking Shepherd, Luke's Shepherd seeks the lost sheep *until He find it*. The third Evangelist knows a Saviour who works moral miracles among poor men. He is aware of the fact that not many rich, not many mighty, are called, and he rejoices in it. 'He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.' Of the three synoptists, Luke has detached the permanent evangelical impulse from all temporal and national limitations, and consequently Luke makes the directest appeal to the modern world. From no other writer does the reader derive such a sense of the joy of the Gospel as from St. Luke."¹

"Last of all," as Clement of Alexandria expressed it long ago, "John perceiving that the bodily (or external) facts had been set forth in the (other) Gospels, . . . by the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual Gospel." In it he re-tells the story of Jesus in order to proclaim Him the only-begotten of the Father, the eternal Word made flesh, at once the the Life and the Light of men and the Living Bread which came down out of heaven.

¹ "Some Characteristics of the Synoptic Writers," by H. G. Wood, in the volume called *The Parting of the Roads*, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson (1912).

The whole of this literature is to be understood as the literature of a living movement of religion, the most remarkable the world has ever known; and the documents are the documents of a missionary Church. To the Jews they proclaim Jesus the true Messiah, the Anointed of the Spirit, the ideal Servant of the Lord, the Son of Man who shall come in glory, and in relation to whom at His coming all men shall be judged. To the Hellenistic world, with its "gods many and lords many" and its multiplicity of "spirits," good and bad, the proclamation is made of the one true God, and the one true "Lord," and of the one Holy "Spirit" who is the Spirit of Christ and of God. Over against the philosophical agnostic with his unknowable Divine Being, his ΘΕΟΣ ΑΓΝΩΣΤΟΣ, the Church affirms the triumphant message that God is knowable and revealed in Jesus. Confronted by emperor-worship and menaced by persecution, she declares not Cæsar but Christ the true "King of kings and Lord of lords": His birth, not that of Augustus, is the true "good tidings" for the world: He, and not Domitian, is rightly to be described as "Lord and God."

Nothing in recorded history is more impressive than these claims: and granting that we know the Lord Jesus, as an historical character, only through what He has accomplished—and this includes, of course, the impress left upon the minds and lives of His contemporaries—nevertheless the creative fact behind the whole development of Christianity is the Jesus of history Himself, a Jesus as divine as God, and as human as man. The

Incarnation, assuming it to be a fact, is a cause adequate to these effects. Is there any other adequate explanation?

And by the Incarnation is meant the doctrine that God is not simply the ultimate Cause and Ground behind the Universe and behind all things, but that He is a God who expresses Himself in and through the events of history, and has a purpose of self-revelation for the world; that, further, in and through the events and experiences of Hebrew religious history, the reality and character of God is more particularly revealed; and that, as the climax of a progressive process of Divine self-revelation, the Divine Life, Character, and Being of God Himself—in particular, an element of Divine Sonship corresponding to the Divine Fatherhood, which on the Christian view was eternally inherent in the Divine Life—was finally in the genuinely human life and experience of Jesus of Nazareth once for all perfectly expressed; so that it becomes true to say that in Jesus Christ God took action for the redemption of the world; or (as it is put in the Nicene Creed in more pictorial language) He who was “God of God” and “Light of Light” and “of one substance with the Father” (i.e., identical with God in His essential nature), “for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven.”

CHAPTER VII

THE HISTORICAL GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

BEFORE any of the books of the New Testament were written, missionaries had already begun to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ beyond the confines of Palestine, and to present it to the peoples of the Græco-Roman world. And the Christianity of history is the religion of the Gentile-Christian Church. But our Lord came upon earth as a Jew, and as a Jew of Palestine. And before there was any Gentile-Christian Church there was already a Jewish-Christian Church, or at least a Jewish-Christian movement within Judaism. It is contended in much recent theological literature that, in the process of transition from a Jewish to a Gentile environment, Christianity itself had changed its character: that it began as a purely Jewish movement concerned with the need for repentance in view of the coming Reign of God, and that in the form in which it eventually spread throughout Europe it had become a "Mystery-Religion," offering salvation through sacramental union with a Divine Lord who died and rose again from the dead. In view of the theory thus sharply formulated, it may be well to begin with a consideration of what has been called "The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire," and to

work back from there to the New Testament, and to the historical beginnings of Christianity.

The Hellenistic age resembled our own in being an age of religious seeking. Old faiths—the ancestral local worships of tribe or city—had died or were dying. The heart and meaning had gone out of them with the downfall of the city-state. Macedonian and subsequently Roman conquests had meant that the Mediterranean world had become international. There was a demand, or at least a need, for a religion which should be international too. To a limited extent, but only to a limited extent, the need was met by the official worship of Rome and Augustus, which began in the Eastern Provinces, where deified monarchs were nothing new. But the worship of Rome and Augustus did nothing to satisfy the heart, and a new spirit had come over the world, unkindly described by Professor Gilbert Murray as a “failure of nerve.” It was really the dawn of humility, combined with a sense of religious need. It found satisfaction in what are called “Mysteries,” which came for the most part from the East. Greece, of course, had her “Mysteries” centuries old—Orphic, Dionysiac, Eleusinian—and those who were initiated were supposed to gain thereby some assurance with regard to the world to come. But the chief religious characteristic of the period with which we are dealing was the conquest of Europe by mystery-cults which came from the nearer East—from Asia Minor, from Syria, from Egypt, and in one case ultimately from Persia. The worship of Cybele, the Great Mother, had been

brought to Rome from Asia Minor as early as the end of the third century B.C., and by the beginning of the Christian era she and her associate Attis were already the centre of a growing mystery-cult. The vogue outside Egypt of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris begins in like manner in pre-Christian times. From Syria came a goddess, Atargatis, and various Baals, generally identified in the Latin world with Jupiter, and later with the Sun. The religion of Mithras was in many localities, though not until the second and third centuries of our era, a serious rival to Christianity itself.

In spite of well-marked individual differences, these religions conformed in important particulars to a common type. What they had in common may be thus summed up :—

(1) They had passed outside the country of their origin and become missionary. They recruited disciples among various races and from every social class ; and thus ceasing to be in any sense national, they had developed into international brotherhoods whose members were linked together not by community of race but by community of worship.

(2) They offered assurance with regard to the world to come, and claimed to set their votaries free from the intolerable tyranny of *εἰμαρμένη* or Fate, on the basis of a myth about the god who was lord of the cult, and who in some cases bore among other titles that of *Σωτήρ*, i.e., Saviour or Deliverer. Usually it was taught that this mythical " Saviour " had died and in some fashion been restored again to life—a trait which is to be explained by the fact that

these deities were originally vegetation-spirits, personifications of the spirit of life or fertility in nature, which seems to die and to come to life with the changing seasons.

(3) The secret was disclosed only to the initiated: initiation comprised not only the impartation of the myth and instruction as to its meaning, but also certain ceremonies, including usually the witnessing of a sacred spectacle in which the myth was dramatized; so that there may be said to have been involved in each of these "mystery-cults" a combination of a saving myth with a saving rite.

It is obvious that Christianity—the Christianity of history—regarded quite externally and superficially, conforms to this same type. As carried westwards by St. Paul and other missionaries, it had its ceremony of initiation and its divine drama, commemorative of its Lord, at which only the initiated might assist; it had its sacred story or myth (if the word may be used without prejudice) about Him who was the centre of its cult; it sought to make disciples of every nation, without distinction of race or class or sex; and it claimed to deliver men from bondage to *εἰμαρμένη* or Fate, and to give them assurance of the life to come. To many a pagan, brought for the first time into contact with its missionaries, it must have appeared as yet another Oriental mystery-cult, imported into Europe from the Levant. In this broad sense the statement may be accepted which is now so commonly made, viz., that it was as a "mystery-religion" that Christianity entered Europe.

To say this is not the same thing as to admit that

Christianity has *borrowed from* the mystery-religions. The theory that any of the essential rites or doctrines of Christianity were directly derived from, or in any important fashion influenced by, the pagan mysteries appears to me to be without foundation. Professor Clemen is stating the facts quite fairly when he remarks that "the mystery-religions exercised but slight influence upon the oldest Christianity. . . . Any deep influence of the Greek mystery-religions upon Christianity begins first with Gnosticism."¹ Christianity as proclaimed in Europe presents certain parallels with the pagan mystery-cults, but it is as independent of them in origin as they themselves were originally independent of one another. Nevertheless it is true, I think, that it was as a saving mystery of redemption that Christianity was proclaimed in the Græco-Roman world, and as such it quickly found itself in competition with other mystery cults, which up to a point presented a similar appeal. Why did it conquer where the others failed?

The question is one to which various answers might be and have been given. It was an advantage to Christianity not to be burdened with a mythology so crude, or with rites so savage, as those which some of its rivals had inherited from a barbaric past. Again, it may be said that Christianity was ethically superior, and that is true; but it was not because of its exacting moral standard, taken by itself, but rather

¹ "Die Mysterienreligionen haben auf das älteste Christentum nur geringen Einfluss ausgeübt. . . . Ein tiefergehender Einfluss der griechischen Mysterienreligionen auf das Christentum beginnt erst im Gnosticismus" (Clemen, *Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum*, pp. 81, 82).

in spite of it, that Christianity prevailed; for the majority of mankind finds it far easier to be religious than to be good. Morality alone has never constituted a gospel, and Professor Reitzenstein is on right lines when he discovers the specific novelty of Christianity, to which presumably its success was partly due, in its proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Other religions professed to set men free from Fate and to make them immortal; but "the tremendous earnestness of the preaching of sin and atonement is lacking," he writes, "so far as I can see, in Hellenism."¹

An equally important answer might be that in Christianity alone was it taught that the Saviour died for love of men, or on their behalf. In pagan mysteries the rôle of the deity who dies and is restored to life is essentially passive. His experience came to be interpreted, indeed, as being typical of that through which his worshippers would pass: he is a kind of pathfinder of the way of life—"so surely as the god was saved, so surely for his worshippers there should be salvation from all distress."² But before he could save others, the god must himself be saved; and he is "saviour," even then, only as it were by accident and as an after-thought. This lay in the nature of the case, and was due to the origin of the myths or legends of these deities in a primitive

¹ "Die furchtbare Ernst der Predigt von der Schuld und Versöhnung fehlt, soweit ich sehe, dem Hellenismus" (Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 180).

■ θαρρείτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένοι.

ἔσται γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία.

(Liturgical fragment—from the Mysteries of Attis?—quoted by Firmicus Maternus, *De err. prof. relig.*, 22).

nature-worship with which the idea of a redemption or deliverance of mankind had nothing originally to do. There was no doctrine in any of the pagan mysteries of an incarnation or passion ethically rooted in the love of God, such as is expressed by the Christian phrases, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was made man, and was crucified also *for us*."

These differences and other differences between Christianity and the pagan mysteries all indicate and depend upon a difference of origin. The pagan mystery-gods are all originally mythical personifications of the life of nature. The Christian "Mystery" is an interpretation of the religious significance of an historical Person. The Emperor Julian, commenting upon the myth of Attis, is reported to have said, "These things never happened, but are always true."¹ The late Professor Bousset, to whose work on Gnosticism I am indebted for this quotation, remarks very acutely that wherever the idea of a mythical redemption and of a mythical redeemer is substituted for a redemption accomplished by and through an historical Personality, the myth or story of redemption tends necessarily to be located far away in the dim beginnings of ancient time.² It was "before the beginning of years" that the myth was supposed to have been enacted; and from this it was but a step for the Emperor Julian, the philosophic modernist of pagan antiquity, to go on to explain

¹ ταῦτα δὲ ἐγένετο μὲν οὐδέποτε, ἔστι δὲ αἰεὶ (quoted by Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, p. 185).

² Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

that, strictly speaking, it never occurred at all, but was merely the symbolic expression of eternal truths.

The Christian Church has never been content to say of its sacred story, "These things never happened but are always true." It proclaimed a Christ whose activity was precisely dated—"in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee."¹ Its Jesus is an historical figure, and the whole point of its Gospel is in the identification of the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith. Its strength comes from its Jewish past, and not from any affinities or parallels with pagan mysteries. The prestige of antiquity it secured by taking over the Jewish Scriptures and the Jewish past, and it claimed the right to do so on the ground that its Christ was, among other things, the fulfilment of the Jewish past. Its Gospel was not an after-thought, because it was the fulfilment of a divine purpose, and in this sense had its beginning "before the foundation of the world." So also the Christ whom it worshipped was not a demi-god, but the supreme revelation of the Eternal Father. Only the supreme revelation had not been given before the beginning of time, but as the climax of time past. Quite recently, in fact, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," had "in these last days" spoken unto mankind "by his Son."² The Church fought a hard dogmatic battle in early times for the conservation of two essential truths—the truth of the

¹ Luke iii. 1.

² Heb. i. 1.

historical reality of Christ's manhood as against docetism, the truth of His essential unity with the Father as against polytheism. She had found the experience of salvation through the Man Christ Jesus, and she would not have Him turned into a myth or regarded as unreal: on the other hand, salvation was the work of God, and therefore the Christ who saves must be Himself the expression in manhood of what God is. That was and is the essential content of the Christian "mystery." Was it an essential departure from the first Jewish-Christian Gospel? I do not think that it really and truly was.

There was, of course, a development—in a certain sense, a translation of the Gospel into new terms. And the development took place upon Gentile-Christian rather than upon Jewish-Christian soil. The Jewish-Christian community spoke of Jesus as the Messiah; the Gentile-Christian community spoke of Him as Lord. That is the usage which we find in St. Paul's Epistles—the title "Messiah" or "Christ" has become part of a proper name; the confession of faith, to be made by "every tongue," is "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."¹ I believe this usage to be pre-Pauline, and to have first established itself at Antioch, where the disciples were first called "Christians." Antioch seems to have been the first important centre of Gentile Christianity, and the title "Lord" was one which would be intelligible to Gentiles, as the title "Messiah" in many cases would not. It had a double importance inasmuch as (i) it suggested

¹ Philipp. ii. 11.

that the Lord Jesus stood in relation to the community of His disciples as the divine "lords" of the pagan cult-brotherhoods stood in relation to their initiates, and (ii) it had been used in the Septuagint as a translation, or rather paraphrase, for the ineffable Name of God, and therefore it tended to associate Jesus closely with the God whom the Old Testament reveals.

But already in purely Jewish Christianity Jesus was acknowledged as Messiah, and that meant at least that in Him God's purposes for His people were summed up, and through Him destined to be realized. The relation of the earliest disciples to the exalted Christ was already a relationship of religious dependence. The development of doctrine which subsequently took place was in essence little more than a gradual thinking out of what was involved in the original Christian faith. St. Paul was quite conspicuously an independent thinker; and in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he emphatically stresses his spiritual independence of the Twelve, he assures us also that the leaders of the Twelve endorsed his preaching. Inevitably the extension of Christianity to the Gentile world involved a development of doctrine, of terminology, to a certain extent of practice and of experience. But neither the Christian sacraments, nor the Christian brotherhood, nor the Christian devotion to Jesus Christ, nor the belief that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and showed Himself alive after His passion by evident tokens, nor the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit—the transforming Energy of God, manifested

in works of power and in human lives enabled to bring forth the fruits of Christlike character—none of these things was in any way peculiar to Hellenistic or Gentile Christianity. We know of no Christianity anywhere which did not involve all these things. A phrase of St. Paul's sums up what it all meant as a fact of experience—"the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit"; and you have there already the germs of the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

It is important to realize that we are indebted for our knowledge of the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth to the witness borne to Him and the tradition handed down about Him by the community of those who believed in Him as Christ. I believe myself that just as there was organic continuity between the Christianity of the Gentile and that of the Jewish Christian Church, so also the Christianity of the Jewish Christian Church stood in close relation to our Lord's own conception of His mission, though it would take too long to establish this in detail. I would only draw attention to the fact that Christianity has been distinguished above all the other religions which in any form have believed in divine incarnation by what has been called its "unswerving historicity of attitude." What is undoubtedly one of the latest of the New Testament writings—I mean the first Epistle of St. John—is still marked by continuous reference to the concrete historical personality of the Master, to His still living example, His way of life and characteristic "walk"—"He that

saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."

It is not, then, in the least true that the Gospel had been transformed into a "mystery" divorced from, or separable from, the historic facts. Nothing is more remarkable than the fact that out of the heart of a Church which had come to hold the developed faith about Jesus implied in the New Testament as a whole there should have come down to us such documents as the Synoptic Gospels, telling the story of Jesus so realistically, so judaically, and in broad outline so convincingly. And there is a further point which always appears to me to be one of the strongest pieces of evidence in the New Testament. St. Paul signalizes in a famous passage of the Epistle to the Galatians the type of character which in his experience is visibly tending to emerge in the lives of converted heathen in whom the Spirit is at work: "Love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, self-control"¹—the picture is painted from life, and taken as a whole it is a *new* type of spiritual character, a new ethical ideal which is here emerging in the midst of the corrupt society of the ancient heathen world. The Gospels are not yet written, and neither St. Paul nor his converts had been among those who had companied with the Lord on earth. And yet the character is manifestly *His* character—it tallies with the portrait unconsciously painted of Jesus in the Gospels. And so I am constrained to believe that Christianity, the Christianity of history, cannot be explained except

¹ Gal. v. 22.

upon the assumption of the reality of the power and working of the Holy Spirit, originating in the creative facts of the life, the character, the passion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and "proceeding" ultimately and eternally "from the Father and the Son".

The Church, of course, has put a doctrinal interpretation upon the facts—has interpreted them, if anyone likes to put it so, in terms of a myth or mystery of divine redemption. But the whole point of the Church's contention both was and is that the interpretation is the true meaning of the facts. Necessarily it is a contention which cannot be "proved"; in the last resort it must be either taken or left. It becomes reasonable if, and only if, it is set in the context of the distinctively Jewish conception of God as the Living One who acts, and is at work, in and through the processes of history, and who is revealed, not simply through what He eternally is, but through what He does. The Church saw in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth a great Act of God for man's salvation, the culmination of a great past and the beginning of a great future; and there are reasons for thinking that the Church was right. But for the endorsement of her faith on the part of individuals there is still needed a venture of self-committal, and an act of personal allegiance to the Saviour whom she proclaims.

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